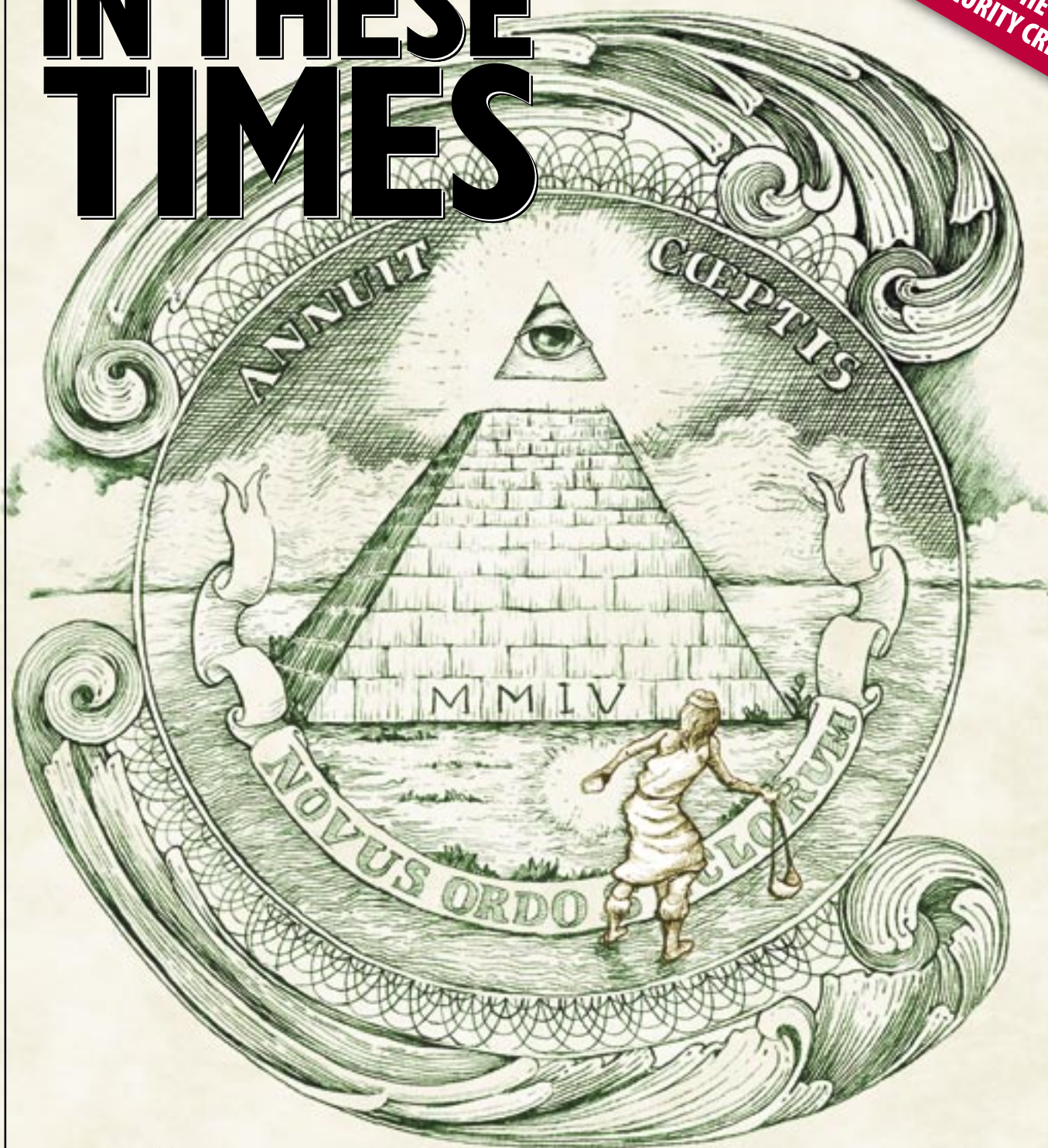


JANUARY 3, 2005

DEAN BAKER ON THE
PHONY SOCIAL SECURITY CRISIS

IN THESE TIMES



Arundhati Roy on

PEOPLE vs. EMPIRE



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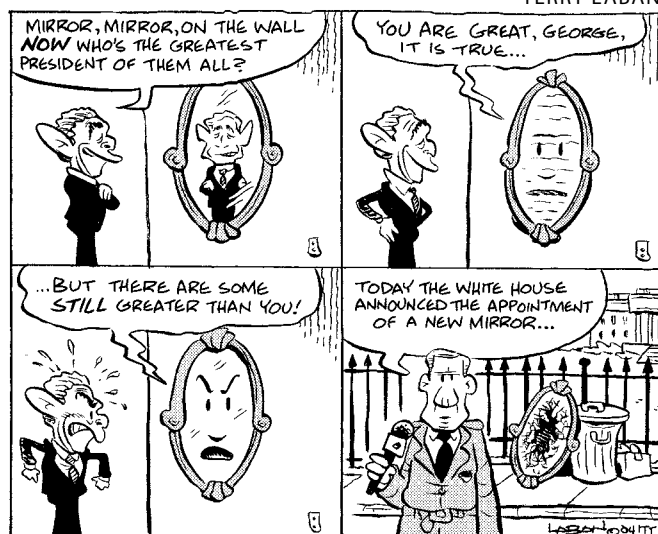
ESSAY Some thoughts on mapping in the age of global networks.

“You are bought by your supermarket.
You are seen by your TV screen.
You are programmed by your computer.
We have all become tools of our tools.”

EDUARDO GALEANO
JULY 1999, *THE PROGRESSIVE*

Editorial

TERRY LABAN



Souls for Sale By Brian Cook

House Majority Leader Tom “The Hammer” DeLay (R-Texas) is the most loathsome politician to be retched onto the national stage in recent memory.

To call him a shit would be to slander feces, which, to its credit, is the natural by-product of a nutritive process. DeLay can claim no such distinction.

The normally dormant House Ethics Committee recently hit DeLay with a barrage of rebukes for actions ranging from his shady fundraisers with energy execs to his misuse of Federal Aviation Administration resources for partisan purposes to his attempted bribery of a fellow House member’s vote. Meanwhile, the Senate Indian Affairs Committee has been investigating the ludicrous \$45 million that two of DeLay’s close associates charged four Indian tribes in lobbying fees.

Then there’s DeLay’s political action committee. He created Texans for a Republican Majority (TRMPAC) to fill the coffers of Texas Republican state legislative candidates, who once elected would redraw districts for the benefit of Texas Republican House candidates. TRMPAC raised \$600,000 from corporations, a no-no according to Texas campaign finance laws. A grand jury investigation has returned 32 indictments, including two for money laundering against TRMPAC’s executive director and a chief DeLay aide. The two men had sent \$190,000 in corporate “soft money”

contributions to the Republican National Committee, which waited two weeks before reallocating it as legal “hard money” to seven Texas House candidates. DeLay has yet to be indicted, but Ronnie Earle, the Austin DA investigating TRMPAC, hasn’t ruled out that possibility, insisting that “anyone who has committed a crime is a target.”

To shield their rainmaker, House Republicans on November 17 rescinded a rule that would have stripped DeLay of his post should he be indicted. (In 1993, then-minority GOP members had created the rule to strip a slew of indicted House Democrats of their leadership and committee chair posts.)

As predictable as the Republicans’ rank hypocrisy was the Democrats’ “shocked” response. “Republicans have reached a new low,” lamented Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.). Added Minority Whip Steny Hoyer (D-Md.): “The Republicans [have] sold their collective soul.”

Leaving aside the misshapen wraith the Republicans’ “soul” brings to mind, we should take Hoyer at his word. Who better than a Democrat to know how much a soul fetches on the free market? Were it not for the Dems’ own Faustian bargain with corporate lobbyists, they could have rid the nation of DeLay’s foul fundraising years ago.

In 1998, the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC) sued three shadowy DeLay-related fundraising operations under the Racketeering Influenced Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act. If certified by a federal judge, RICO suits allow plaintiffs vast access to all of the defendant’s relevant papers and records. When Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson certified the DCCC’s suit, it appeared the dark nexus of DeLay’s fundraising operations would finally see the light of day. But the DCCC settled the case before going to trial.

Many suspect the Democrats feared that going to trial would give the Republicans access to their own fundraising schemes and that any jury-mandated reforms of the campaign finance system would affect them as well. Thus, having temporarily slowed the DeLay juggernaut, the Democrats gave up the opportunity to institute lasting reform.

This consistent commitment to political expediency over principle suggests DeLay may be the unvarnished truth of the Democrats themselves. Like Kerry’s critique of Bush’s handling of the Iraq war, they don’t necessarily disagree with what DeLay does, just his excessive way of doing it. To remedy a campaign finance system that serves only the wealthy, Democrats need to examine their own culpability and offer real alternatives. “Clean Money, Clean Election” reforms that provide an even playing field for candidates would be a good place to start (www.publiccampaign.org). There is no reason for DeLay. ■



Don't Be a Joel

How would you feel, Joel Bleifuss, if a generation of young people came along and insisted that their preferred scatological term for penis is "joel" ("Presidential Cockfight," November 15)? Then they'd be saying, "Oh, he's such a joel." Or "I have a big joel."

My parents gave me the nickname Dick, and that's what all my friends call me out of affection and respect. I don't mind the use of standard swear words in your pages. I do think it was in extreme bad taste to include the Margaret Cho piece. You wouldn't publish words that refer in insulting ways to black people, gay people, women, or other specific groups of human beings. Why, then, have you published the derogatory, obscene and deeply hurtful words directed at the thousands of human beings named Richard?

Richard W. Hill
East Lansing, Mich.

Historical Precedents

The editorial "The Choice is Yours" (November 15) by editor Joel Bleifuss has the right last line—we cannot afford four more years of Bush. But his opening remarks may be too cautious. Bush not a fascist? Who says?

I suggest our definition and understanding of fascism as a political entity has been molded by what took place in Adolf Hitler's Third Reich of the '30s. Fascism does not demand brown-shirted storm troopers breaking windows, burning books and igniting gas chambers. Those came later.

Fascism is first a totalitarian government run by a despot, to be sure, but needs the *sine qua non* of having a foreign policy that shoots first and negotiates later, if at all. Italian dictator Benito Mussolini did that in 1935 and was the first to call his

system fascistic, and Hitler did it throughout his reign.

Look at the chronology:

- Both Hitler and Bush II essentially lost their elections and required the appointment by a demoralized chancellor and dubious Supreme Court.
- Within months, both used major traumas—the Berlin Reichstag fire in 1933 and the 9/11 tragedy in 2001—as a license to quickly enact legislation that seriously altered civil rights.
- Hitler immediately installed the German security laws that created his feared Gestapo and Bush *et al* came up with the Patriot Act and Homeland Security regulations. Both societies were encouraged to spy on their neighbors and report such activities to the "proper authorities."

Bleifuss needs no disclaimers. It can't happen here? It is happening here.

Don Sloan
New York

In the Aftermath

In These Times covered the election in real time on our Web site (www.inthesetimes.com) and on our blog (www.theittlist.com). Several of our readers sent along their thoughts after the results became clear:

To all those despairing over

and baffled at the Bush victory, here is the good news. Bush spoke often this campaign about an "ownership society." He cannot exclude himself from that policy.

A president that takes no responsibility for his actions, and lies about the consequences of his policies, in his second term will have to "own up" to his policies, and not dump them on another administration. Iraq is a disaster—and likely to get much worse. The economy will continue to be in shambles and the divide between rich and poor will widen, especially with the dismantling of what's left of the New Deal and Great Society programs.

Over the next four years Bush will not be able to hide from the real results of these decisions. The blame game is over, Mr. Bush—now you have to take ownership.

Ric Doringo
Willoughby, Ohio

I'm just a working-class (unemployed) liberal living in southern Colorado (a right-wing, ultraconservative, "gung-ho" military region, a mecca of Christian fundamentalism). At least half of Colorado voted for Kerry this election. So why did the media declare Colorado "solidly red" when Cheney himself made his fourth visit just two days before the election (fearing the "swing" vote)? The Electoral College simply declared irrelevant 50 percent of Coloradans' opinion about Bush.

It's time key high-profile media personalities began discussing the idea of an independent liberal media company—a consortium of newspapers, magazines, talkshows, TV pro-

www.inthesetimes.com

The ITT List

For a daily window into the minds of *In These Times* staff members, visit "The ITT List," www.theittlist.com, our weblog of political news and analysis, also featuring staff recommendations on books, music and movies.

On-Line Survey: Defining "Progressive Priorities"

Who are progressives, what do they stand for and what's next for the progressive movement? Take *In These Times'* online survey, "Progressive Priorities," to answer these questions and more. Results will be released in the next issue and on the *In These Times* Web site.

Join the discussion.
Don't miss our lively online forums.

grams and publishing houses organized under one roof, one name, not unlike ABC and Fox. Currently, the liberal voice (if there is one) is so scattered, so isolated, so fragmented, and so much at the mercy of small donation drives and powerful conservative media outlets that it has too little impact. It's always on the defensive, always just surviving.

We could say its initial agenda would be twofold: First, to educate Americans about the true meaning of liberalism—as in “liberal democracy”—to finally dispel the myths, stereotypes and lies concocted by the political right for so long. Secondly, to pull the political “center” back to the true center, again by simply informing and educating the public.

In these desperate times, we must be visionary and begin taking bold steps if we are not to be permanently silenced by corporatist ideologues and the Christian right. We must begin thinking outside the box, as Republicans have done so successfully for so long.

*Richard Hiatt
Guffey, Colo.*

During the run up to the elections, most progressive media closed party ranks and embraced a mentality of Anybody but Bush. Given the abject failure of the Kerry campaign and the Democratic Party—and the waste of millions of dollars in campaign funds and the

millions of volunteer hours that could have strengthened our movement and made life better for millions of downtrodden Americans had those resources been given instead to community organizations, progressives and radicals need to question their support for the institutional left.

The Democrats have no excuses aside from their own incompetence and elitism. Even if motivated only by competitive self-interest, they could have challenged the disenfranchisement of millions of voters of color in Florida, Ohio and elsewhere, or simply waited for provisional ballots to be counted, to have sustained a substantial chance at victory.

A party that is so amoral,

and so contemptuous of its grassroots constituency that it won't even defend their civil rights does not deserve a shred of support from us. Under another four years of Bush, progressives and radicals need to rethink our strategies.

*Peter Gelderloos
Harrisonburg, Va.*

Corrections

In last issue's “What issues should the Democrats focus on?” we incorrectly identified Rep. Nancy Pelosi. She is, of course, the House Minority Leader.

We also neglected to include the URL for Farai Chideya's Pop and Politics site: www.popandpolitics.com.

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A student throws a stone during clashes with riot police following a demonstration against the visit of President Bush.

MAURICIO DUENAS / AFP / GETTY

War and Hope in Colombia

Despite glowing claims by Bush and Uribe, both violence and the drug trade rage on. *By Ana Carrigan*

ON HIS WAY HOME FROM THE ASIA-PACIFIC Economic Summit in Chile, President George Bush stopped off in the Caribbean city of Cartagena on November 22 to see Colombian President Alvaro Uribe Velez. Uribe is George Bush's closest regional ally in the global anti-terrorism campaign. Known as "Bushito" (little Bush), he spared no efforts to provide suitable security for his guest.

Cartagena became a ghost town. Alcohol was banned for 24 hours, businesses shut and workers were ordered to stay home. The airport, airspace and waters of Cartagena Bay were closed. Combat helicopters and fighter planes patrolled the sky, and naval submarines and armed patrol boats guarded the waters of the silent port. As sharpshooters crouched along rooftops, 15,000 army, navy and police troops lined the streets, alongside 1,200 black-clad anti-riot police and numerous plainclothes secret police, 50 bomb-sniffing dogs and two anti-ex-

plosive robots. Meanwhile, an American aircraft carrier stood anchored at the entrance to the bay.

Bush spent three and a half hours on Colombian soil. He was the guest at a lengthy lunch party and posed for photos with Orlando Cabrera, the Colombian-born shortstop for the Boston Red Sox. At an event billed as a "press conference," the press were permitted four questions before Bush closed down the proceedings and departed, thirty minutes ahead of schedule. The two leaders read lengthy statements congratulating each other on their successes in the fight against narco-terrorists and drugs and noted that their policies were strengthening Colombia's democracy, protecting human rights and promoting the rule of law.

"President Uribe and I share a basic optimism. This war against narco-terrorism can and will be won and Colombia is well on its way to that victory," said Bush.

Biblical Mandate

Mary Ann Kreitzer, president of the Catholic Media Coalition, is almost jubilant. For her, the election results heralded the "clear indication of the biblical separation of the sheep from the goats."

"The red sheep of the heartland decisively rejected gay marriage (in 11 states) while the blue California goats approved billions to cannibalize embryos for their stem cells. ... The two-edged sword of truth has sliced the nation separating those who care about traditional moral values from those who call abortion, gay marriage, and embryonic stem cell research progress. ... Voters rejected the party of gay activists, radical feminists, lesbians, the Hollywood elite, pornographers, death-peddlers, anti-Christian bigots, and apostate Catholics," she wrote. "The outcome was not an ending but a beginning. It is time to hold the Republicans' feet to the fire. The George Bush who ... named gay activist Michael Guest as Ambassador to Romania and allows Guest's paramour to play hostess, needs to be reminded that sodomy is a sin that cries to heaven for vengeance."

It remains to be seen if the newly appointed Margaret Spellings is a ewe or a nanny goat who will burn for eternity.

"The mandate given the President may cause Spellings to become the most controversial education secretary to date," says Marshall Fritz, president of the Alliance for the Separation of School & State. "It can easily be argued that part of this mandate is to recover losses suffered at the hands of big-government proponents. What better place to start than with the Department of Education?"

On November 20, 156 members of the Alliance for the Separation of School & State called for the "extinction of government schools as the gateway to honest education." They were gathered at a conference held at Washington's Omni Shoreham Hotel—which Fritz described as "the only convention hotel around Washington that doesn't rent adult movies." He explained, "We're taking a stand against hotels that are just porn shops built to look like a hotel."

Forget sheep and goats, let's separate the church from the state.

—Joel Bleifuss

"My nation will continue to help Colombia prevail in this vital struggle."

Translation: "Plan Colombia," the \$4 billion counter-narcotics program, launched during the Clinton administration and extended from counter-narcotics to counter-terrorism in August 2002, will be continued when it expires next year.

Following 9/11, the FARC guerrillas have lost their identity as a peasant insurgency sustained by endemic rural poverty and morphed into an "illegal armed group" of "narco-terrorists." It now seems inevitable that, pursuant to its status as a new front in the global anti-terror campaign, Colombia will continue to attract U.S. military involvement in its endless, 40-year-old conflict.

Both governments proclaim their policies are working. The White House reports that aerial fumigation of coca fields has cut cultivation by 20 percent for the second year running. Drug seizures have prevented tons of cocaine from reaching the United States. Captures of drug traffickers have escalated and Uribe has signed record numbers of U.S. extradition orders.

Yet, these statistics don't tell the whole story. The White House cannot explain why there has been no impact yet on the streets of U.S. cities, and the drug czar has not even acknowledged that, according to the most recent figures from the Rand Corporation, the price of street cocaine in the United States has actually fallen by 31 percent since Plan Colombia began in 2000.

Meanwhile, no one admits to the impact indiscriminate chemical fumigation has on food crops, farm animals and water supplies, although last month a senior government adviser resigned to protest the government's failure to monitor the health effects. In desperately poor, remote areas, where farmers have no alternative way of making a living, the arrival of American spray planes sends young peasant recruits into the war and drives their desperate parents to uproot themselves and grow the crop elsewhere. In the last two years, coca cultivation has spread from 12 Colombian provinces to 23.

Another gulf between official claims and the experience of ordinary Colombians centers on President Uribe's internal security policies. Of course, those who live in an upper- or middle-class residential area in any major town and wish to travel along the highways between the big cities may find Uribe's security policies brilliant. Deploying troops in towns and along major highways during weekends, he has slashed

the number of kidnappings and lowered the murder rate. It is now safe for wealthy Colombians to travel to their farms, or to visit their friends, or simply to party all night. The less fortunate may beg to differ.

And it remains unclear whether the counterinsurgency war is going well. Backed by U.S. intelligence and logistics, "Plan Patriot," the Colombian army's most aggressive counterinsurgency campaign in living memory, has pushed the FARC guerrillas out of the towns and back into remote rural areas. But Plan Patriot has not lived up to its promises, failing to capture a single FARC leader or to release a single FARC hostage. In the special war zone Uribe created in the oil-rich Arauca region on the border with Venezuela—where U.S. Special Forces guard Occidental Petroleum's pipeline—the new military tactics that were supposed to "liberate" the zone by using paid informers to root out civilian guerrilla sympathisers have failed spectacularly; Arauca is more violent than ever. And in those areas where the army has routed the FARC, the army coordinates its operations with the paramilitaries, who remain behind to consolidate their control, substituting one form of tyranny for another.

Meanwhile, the poor living in the war zones are caught in the crossfire, with both sides suspecting them of sympathizing with the enemy. War opponents, government dissidents, human rights defenders, union organizers, and indigenous and community leaders have been "disappeared," killed, or fingered by one of the government's millions of paid informants and then swept up in the mass arrests that, according to the inspector general, detained 125,000 people in the first six months of this year on "fragile evidence." So long as the paramilitary ceasefire agreement remains a fiction, the usual killers still stalk Uribe's Colombia. They have murdered 1,900 people since the "para" talks began two years ago.

In the midst of this bleak scenario, Colombian Foreign Secretary Carolina Barco's announcement that the Colombian government and the FARC have jointly requested the Swiss government to help them reach a humanitarian accord for the release of the FARC's hostages has shined a welcome, humane light into the surrounding gloom. Even in Colombia, hope dies last. ■

ANA CARRIGAN, author of *The Palace of Justice: A Colombian Tragedy*, is a frequent contributor to *In These Times*.

APPALL-O-METER

4.1 Sometimes a Quaint Notion

What's a school peace officer to do when a 14-year-old refuses to surrender his Game Boy? Why, Taser the scamp, of course!

That's what happened at Lincoln Park High School in suburban Detroit, according to the *Detroit Free Press*, when an emotionally disturbed student was sent to the assistant principal's office for playing with his Game Boy. Ordered to surrender the electronic toy, the miscreant in question began to punch and kick and bite.

Two applications of non-lethal electric current helped put the lad in his place, which currently is the Wayne County Juvenile Detention Facility. Bond for the boy—who, according to his mother, had been kidnapped in the fourth grade—was set at \$2,000.

2.9 What's in a Name?

At the University of Missouri College of Veterinary Medicine there is something called the E. Paige Laurie Professorship, named for the dignitary who, until recently, also lent the university's new sports arena its moniker.

But E. Paige Laurie, 22, is no ordinary practitioner of naming-rights philanthropy. The recent college graduate's name is plastered all over Mizzou's campus because her mother made an ass load of money being the niece of Wal-Mart mogul Sam Walton. Nancy Laurie and her husband kicked in one-third of the \$75 million needed to

build Missouri's new stadium, on the condition the place be dubbed Paige Sports Arena.

The name never sat well with students and alumni, reports the *Los Angeles Times*. But the family and university officials agreed to change the name only after Paige's freshman year roommate, Elena Martinez, told



ABC's "20/20" that she wrote Paige's papers and other assignments in almost every course the heiress took at the University of Southern California. Martinez, who the *Times* reports had to

drop out of USC for financial reasons, took as much as \$20,000 in compensation.

1.9 The Power of Bush Compels You

The United Church of Christ, a liberal mainstream Protestant denomination, has prepared an ad campaign to publicize its qualities of tolerance and inclusiveness. One TV commercial depicts bouncers turning away gay male worshippers from a church door. Text appears, announcing: "Jesus didn't turn people away. Neither do we."

This was too hot to handle for some networks, including the putatively superliberal CBS, which released this statement explaining, in part: "Because this commercial touches on the exclusion of gay couples and other minority groups by other individuals and organizations, and the fact that the executive branch has recently proposed a constitutional amendment to define marriage as a union between a man and a woman, this spot is unacceptable for broadcast..."

Behold the power of a "mandate."

—Dave Mulcahey

Deep Divide

Ukraine's contested election reflects Russia's push to reunify. By Fred Weir

MOSCOW—ANOTHER street revolt rocks an eastern European capital, and the world stops to watch a now-familiar televised scenario: an election allegedly stolen, energized but peaceful crowds battle for democracy with staunch Western backing and, in the final act, frightened Soviet-style bureaucrats make a clumsy exit from power.

As *In These Times* went to press, it wasn't clear whether Ukraine's "Chestnut Revolution" will turn out as neatly as its recent predecessors in Serbia and Georgia, but there are grounds to hope that it might. A compromise, which would result in new elections, appeared to be taking shape, but whatever the short-term outcome, Ukrainian society has likely been changed forever. Thousands of protesters surging through the streets of Kiev and other cities were confronting the semi-authoritarian, oligarch-backed regime of President Leonid Kuchma, which almost certainly tried to falsify the results of November's presidential election in favor of Kuchma's anointed successor, Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich. They were also defying the Kremlin, which invested huge sums of cash and the personal prestige of President Vladimir Putin in a brazen effort to manipulate Ukraine's voters into choosing Yanukovich over his liberal, westernizing challenger, former Central Bank Chairman Viktor Yushchenko.

But there are reasons to worry that Ukraine's fragile post-Soviet stability has already been undermined by the bitter dispute, which has deeply aggravated the longstanding divisions between

the country's heavily Russified, industrial east and the largely agricultural, nationalistic west. Since leaving the USSR in 1991, Ukraine has managed to maintain a vibrant—if muddled—democratic political culture, with relatively independent parliament, media and courts, while neighboring Russia and Belarus have become aggressively recentralized states run by super-presidential figures. Though nationalists have made desultory efforts to compel schools, media and public organizations to use only Ukrainian, these have had virtually no impact on those Ukrainians, roughly half the population, who describe Russian as their "first language."

In foreign policy, Ukraine has walked a careful line between Moscow and the West, gladly accepting subsidized Russian oil and gas and favorable terms for its otherwise unmarketable agricultural products, while taking aid from the West and making polite noises about eventually joining NATO.

In the past few years, however, the world has become more interested in Ukraine. An expanding European Union has moved right to Ukraine's borders, taking in Poland, which has strong historical links with western Ukraine. Putin's Russia, flush with oil profits and seeking to reassert hegemony in the former Soviet space, has designed a four-nation common market for Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan as a springboard for Russian economic modernization.

"We would like to restore what was lost with the Soviet Union's disintegration, albeit in line with different concepts,"

Ukraine Clearly Divided

This breakdown of the presidential vote shows a clear division between the Western-leaning and the Russia-friendly parts of the country. A breakup of the former Soviet state is possible.



Putin told a meeting of post-Soviet leaders last June. "We must steer toward integration ... concerted action is the only way to survive in conditions of [global] competition."

Ukraine's election, featuring two moderate members of the country's traditional elite, thus became a proxy battle between larger global forces. Inevitably, and dangerously, Yushchenko and Yanukovich spun their messages to appeal to the country's two very different constituencies.

Ukraine, Europe's second-largest state by territory, is split down the middle between eastern and western populations whose historical, linguistic, religious and cultural differences make them almost foreigners to one another. Western Ukrainians, who have spent much of their history honing a strong sense of national identity under Polish and Austro-Hungarian rule, strongly favor Yushchenko's plans to steer Ukraine into NATO and the European Union as rapidly as possible.

But half the country's 48 million people live in the industrial eastern zones, which were part of Russia and the USSR for more than 300

years. Many of them speak no Ukrainian and identify most closely with the Russian population just across the recently established border. Yanukovich's pledges to make Russian the country's second official language, to allow dual Ukrainian-Russian citizenship and to join the Kremlin-sponsored free-trade union with Russia resonate strongly in Ukraine's eastern reaches.

No matter which Viktor emerges victorious in Ukraine's power struggle, he is likely to adopt radical measures to satisfy his loyal constituents. In either case, the breakup of Ukraine looms as a real possibility. Several western regions rejected official election results that labeled Yanukovich the winner and recognized Yushchenko as president. The eastern regions, where most of Ukraine's industry is concentrated, are already planning referenda on "autonomy"—read rejoining Russia—if Yushchenko becomes president. And with Moscow and the West facing off over Ukraine, with sharply divergent agendas, the possibility of a new Cold War looks more likely than at any time since the USSR's demise. ■

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SINCE THE MURDER of more than 300 people in a Beslan school seized by Chechen militants in September, Russians have been intently focused on terrorism. As in the United States, this has meant increasing security and suspicion.

But Russian teachers Svetlana "Sveta" Yakimenko, 51, and Tatyana "Tanya" Molodtseva, 46, have found a different way to fight local terrorism: by battling domestic violence and the trafficking of women, supporting women through loans and health programs, and opening dialogue between people of different faiths and ethnic groups.

As a former high school English teacher in a suburb of Moscow, Yakimenko has long been involved with peace and justice movements. During a peace march attended by international visitors in Russia in 1987, she befriended Illinois-based social worker Sallie Gratch, who eventually relocated to the Ukraine. Five years later, the two women founded an organization called Project Keshet.

"Keshet" means "connection," and they based the group on the Jewish principle that faith and social activism are inextricably linked. Fighting rampant domestic violence and other abuses against women, they thought, would help to increase peace and understanding on larger levels.

Since then, Project Keshet has grown to serve thousands of women of various backgrounds, with programs in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova. After the Beslan massacre, the group felt it only natural to take leadership in shaping local attitudes and approaches.

"The whole country was in fear and anger," says Yakimenko, during a November speaking visit to the United States. "It was like a civil war, everyone was ready to get a gun. ... But the women we work with, who are community leaders and organizers, realized that's what the terrorists wanted, to sow hatred and fear."

In response, the group wrote an appeal to 165 community, ethnic and religious groups encouraging them to start learning about each other and thereby violence in society. "In two days we got responses from over 30 organizations and started organizing roundtables where we learn about each other's cultures and traditions," Yakimenko says.

Molodtseva, also a high school English teacher, works as the outreach coordinator and a computer teacher for Project Keshet. She got involved with the group several years ago,

when her teenage daughter asked her to attend a retreat where mothers and daughters were encouraged to talk about sex, relationships and other often-taboo subjects.

"That was difficult because I had never talked about those things with my mother," Molodtseva said. "This helped us bond as women."



Svetlana Yakimenko

She lives in Kineshma, a town on the Volga River that is home to a large women's prison. Many of the women are incarcerated as a result of their attempts to confront or escape domestic abusers. Molodtseva often visits the prison to bring feminine care products and other supplies.

She notes that while some fear international terrorism, many women live in terror every day. Many don't feel they can challenge their husbands or seek help. They say that husbands will often come home from work tired and drunk and take their frustration out on their wives. Others must sneak away to attend Project Keshet activities. "It's not easy for women to leave home and come

to a women's group," Yakimenko said.

In November, the group hosted a series of events called "Sixteen Days to End Domestic Violence."

HIV prevention and other sexual health issues have been another major focus of the project. They teach

sex-ed courses using Planned Parenthood's model and have done large fundraising drives for babies born with HIV.

Project Keshet also serves as a resource for the high number of Eastern European women who are trafficked to foreign countries to work as low-paid domestic servants or in the sex industry. The group mounts puppet shows demonstrating how traffickers approach women with false promises of well-paying jobs, and provides the women with health clinics, refugee organizations and other resources. The group claims that their appeals to politicians in the Russian Duma played a large role in recently proposed anti-trafficking legislation.

Project Keshet's work ties in and reacts to larger global patterns. "It's all linked," said Yakimenko. "Women might decide to go abroad because of domestic violence, or because they lost their job. If they can become self-sufficient here, that won't happen as much."

Molodtseva serves as a prime example—she says that working with Project Keshet has helped her to take control of her own life. "Before I wasn't socially active, I was just a wife of my husband and a mother of my children," she said. "Now I am my own person." ■

Project Keshet: Creating Connections

By Kari Lydersen



Green + Red = Blue

AS A KEY FACTION OF THE REPUBLICAN BASE, hunters and anglers, often hailing from rural, culturally conservative areas, are seemingly the last people on earth who would call themselves environmentalists or progressives. The GOP has for years courted this demographic by stressing an unwavering support for gun ownership rights, and by vilifying urban Democrats who have pushed for modest gun control.

But now the GOP is increasingly trying to erode other protections for outdoorsmen. As the old saying goes, "That dog won't hunt."

In states and localities throughout America, more and more Republican lawmakers are taking orders from wealthy landowners, developers and energy companies. These fat cats want to weaken laws that mandate hunting and fishing access rights, sell off public lands, privatize hunting licenses, and allow drilling and mining in the most sacred natural preserves. That puts the GOP squarely at odds not only with hunters and anglers, but also with exurbanites concerned about open space and sprawl.

In the 2004 Montana statewide elections, public lands and hunting and fishing access rights became central. Democratic gubernatorial candidate Brian Schweitzer sharply criticized his opponent for previously trying to restrict the state's treasured Stream Access Law at the behest of wealthy private landowners. Schweitzer called for keeping public lands in the state's hands, and for spending more money to maintain them. It was one of the key ways he outperformed previous Democrats in rural areas and won his race in a solidly Republican state.

In Colorado, where Democrats won a U.S. Senate seat, a U.S. House seat and the state legislature, the Bush administration has riled up locals by trying to weaken the Clinton-era Roadless Area Conservation Rule. Specifically, the White House is pushing a court case that would make sure the law does not stop industrial development in designated roadless areas. According to the *Denver Post*, the gas drilling that such a case would allow "generally horrifies locals in the Roaring Fork Valley"—a traditionally conservative area. "This is all about quality of life for folks in the Carbondale area—quality of air, water, hunting, fishing, recreation and ranching," said town trustee Scott Chaplin.

Not to be deterred by this kind of grassroots anger, Republican Colorado Gov. Bill Owens' administration is now considering providing more big-game hunting licenses to private landowners—effectively making

the wealthy the arbiters of hunting policy. Colorado outdoorsmen oppose the measure because landowners would be able to sell their licenses for whatever price they see fit. As one local newspaper columnist wrote, the move would "greatly diminish access to prized bull elk, buck deer and buck antelope for anyone who doesn't pay the increasingly large fees for a privately controlled tag. ... Such a trend takes Colorado hunting increasingly toward the European model of privatization of game."

In Wyoming, the Bush administration's land policy took center stage in Republican Rep. Barbara Cubin's reelection battle. "I don't think we should sell any of our federal lands," Democratic challenger Ted Ladd said in one debate, "and I think we need to return to true multiple use—where it's not just corporations who get access, but it's hunters, it's fishermen, it's recreationalists—to ensure that our public lands are not only the foundation of our economy, but they're the foundation of our culture." Ladd ultimately held the five-term Cubin to her smallest margin of victory despite being far outspent.

In solidly blue states that have Republican governors, similar radical land policies are on the agenda. In Maryland, where suburban sprawl is a top-tier concern, Republican Gov. Bob Ehrlich is moving forward with plans to sell off state land for development. Internal documents obtained by the *Washington Post* show that Ehrlich's plans are being driven by his backers in the real estate and development industries.

Similarly, in California, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has gutted funding for the Parks Department. Environmentalists and outdoorsmen alike fear this has deliberately left the state unable to manage its public lands, until eventually they will have to be sold off. Schwarzenegger has also prohibited the addition of new lands to the park system.

These and countless other battles about public lands and hunting and fishing rights have the potential to radically alter the national electoral map, especially in the Mountain West. Democrats already occupy four Senate seats and four governor's mansions in six Rocky Mountain states—and there are bound to be more gains at the electoral college level if the GOP continues to ignore outdoorsmen.

Bloviating about the supposedly vast divide between "red" and "blue" states ignores the possibility that if progressives continue to make green environmentalists out of red-state outdoorsmen, the election night map may look a lot more blue the next time around. ■

Battles over public lands and hunting and fishing rights could radically alter the national electoral map.

DAVID SIROTA is a fellow at the Center for American Progress. The views expressed here are his own.



Capitol Report *By Craig Aaron*

A Little More to the Left

Republicans understand the concept: The harder they push, the further they shift the nation's political discourse.

A MONTH AFTER THE ELECTION, I'M STILL NURSING a hangover from downing too much Kerry Kool-Aid. (My previous column taught me a valuable lesson: Never drink and divine.) And the Democratic Party seems similarly sluggish, mired in its quadrennial period of self-flagellation, sniping and backbiting about why they lost this time.

If previous setbacks are any guide, the same consultants and pollsters who lost the election will again win the battle to interpret its results. Almost inevitably, they will conclude that the party needs to shift further to the right, ignoring the base (who else are they going to vote for?) and cozying up to the stockbrokers or gun owners or home-schoolers (or better yet—all three!) with new proposals for “budget reform” and hints of “flexibility” on abortion rights.

The only thing wrong with this strategy, of course, is that it loses every time. By tacking rightward, Democrats not only alienate their base, but encourage swing voters to think like Republicans. They “activate the other side's models,” in the words of the unexpectedly in vogue linguist George Lakoff. The Republicans seem to understand this concept: The harder they push, the further they shift the whole country's political discourse. Without a countervailing force, what else would you expect?

Consider how much more moderate Reagan's Republican Party was compared to the current “majority of the majority.” And some progressives have grown downright nostalgic for the halcyon days of Richard Nixon. No matter how far the Democrats move to the right, the Republicans can always go further.

Notice that no Republicans are talking about compromise or catering to moderates. “Now comes the revolution,” Richard Viguerie, one of the main architects of the New Right, crowed to the *New York Times* on the day after the election. “If you don't implement the conservative agenda now, when do you?”

Viguerie has waited 40 years for this moment. As he recently reminisced in Salon.com: “Conservatives had never nominated anyone for president. That was our first challenge, and we did that in 1964. Then, we needed to nominate and elect somebody, and we did that in 1980. Then our next goal was to nominate, elect and govern. And that's what we have not yet done. We have not yet governed.”

That long-term focus—not on the next election, but on the next generation—isn't the only thing liberals could learn from the right. They've also built institutions outside the Republican Party, while never abandoning

the GOP as a vehicle to take power. They've trained local candidates and talking heads, nurtured intellectuals, and invested in “alternative media”—from direct mail and magazines to talk radio to the Internet. (Much of this effort is detailed in Viguerie's terrible but terribly important new book, *America's Right Turn*.)

Instead of borrowing the right's policies, Democrats should have been stealing their tactics. Of course, that's exactly what they did to us. “We've taken close to 100 percent of the left's tactics,” Viguerie admitted in a 1979 interview with *In These Times*. “We're into making a list of all the things they do and doing the same things.”

Viguerie literally stole our playbook, cribbing from solicitations used during the 1972 McGovern campaign. “I'm studying it,” he said in that same interview. “I'm trying to build a movement. I don't know if you've heard that word much. Among us conservatives that's a word that's used constantly. The movement.”

The fundamental elements of that movement are infrastructure and ideology. When it comes to the former, liberals are starting to catch up—with their own nascent think tanks, rapid-response operations, small-donor mailing lists and get-out-the-vote efforts. But on the latter, they suffer from an acute case of *hypocognition*—Lakoff's term for a lack of useful ideas.

Part of the problem is how deeply the Democrats have internalized the attacks from the likes of Viguerie. They're so afraid of being tagged as liberals or tree huggers or doves by the other side's echo chamber that they've lost their convictions. But the way to deflect charges of “class warfare” is not by providing more corporate welfare. Being the kinder, gentler pro-corporate party—a Costco to the GOP's Wal-Mart, a Starbucks to its Cracker Barrel—does not a movement make.

Instead of middling centrism, the Democrats need bold ideas to counteract the right's lies, especially the “cultural populism” they rely on to mask a massive upward redistribution of wealth. These ideas aren't necessarily new ones: embracing economic populism, fighting inequality, challenging corporate corruption, providing universal healthcare, protecting the environment, rejecting imperialism.

But if the Democrats want to take back the country, they need to start talking less about positioning and more about these principles. The good news for those of us to the left of liberal is that the Democratic Leadership Council and the rest of the party leadership no longer has much of a choice. Moving further to the left, it seems, may be the only way to save the center. ■

CRAIG AARON is the communications director of the national media reform group Free Press (www.freepress.net) and a senior editor of *In These Times*. He is the editor of *Appeal to Reason: 25 Years In These Times* (Seven Stories Press). The views expressed here are his own.



Blocking Mr. Torture

AS PROGRESSIVES WONDER AT HOW BEST TO direct—and revive—the struggle to return America to its basic values, a dizzying number of worthy causes, coalitions and strategies present themselves. But one immediate issue must be engaged: America has become a country that tortures its prisoners.

The mainstream media uses the word “torture” to describe those (hundreds of) documented cases of “isolated” incidents, performed by those “few bad apples” at Abu Ghraib and elsewhere. When it comes to the pervasive use of torture at Guantánamo’s Camp X-Ray and scores of other secret military prisons around the globe, the media has preferred the term “abuse.” It’s a word that takes the edge off.

That may be changing with the leak late in November to the *New York Times* of a confidential report by the International Committee of the Red Cross that said the Bush administration had institutionalized a system that uses “refined and repressive” methods “tantamount to torture” to extract information from prisoners at Guantánamo. “The construction of such a system, whose stated purpose is the production of intelligence, cannot be considered other than an intentional system of cruel, unusual and degrading treatment and a form of torture,” said the report.

The show trials of low-level military personnel have allowed the administration to evade political responsibility for the systematic torture, rape and murder of American-held captives. In the lull between sentences (which look like traffic citations compared to what the average perp gets for holding an ounce of crack), the public is reminded that military “investigations” are happening, have been happening, or will be happening. Donald Rumsfeld took “full responsibility” on May 7—though he has been too busy leveling Fallujah and torpedoing the intelligence reform bill to serve hard time.

Against this background noise, George Bush is grooming Alberto Gonzales, White House legal counsel and a long-time political ally from Texas, for the Supreme Court. The first step in this process is to install him as attorney general. As White House sources told the *New York Times*, his Senate confirmation process for attorney general will be a dry run for

a future Supreme Court nomination.

In addition to serving as the president’s lawyer, Gonzales is, in fact, Mr. Torture himself: the man who laid out for the Bush administration the arguments for voiding the Geneva Conventions and end-running the War Crimes Act, thereby providing legal cover for the horrors inflicted on those unfortunate enough to disappear into the new American global gulag.

Gonzales’ January 25, 2002 memorandum sanctioning the Bush administration’s torturing ways has become an infamous addition to the post-Orwellian canon. In it, he argues that President Bush runs the risk of being prosecuted as a war criminal—unless he decrees through an executive order that what Gon-

zales termed the “quaint” Geneva Conventions don’t apply to his own behavior. To put it another way, Bush doesn’t break the law if he decides that he’s above the law.

Gonzales doesn’t appear to have a predilection for inflicting pain. He’d rather simply kill people. As death penalty expert Alan Berlow wrote in the *Washington Post*, before Bush promoted him to the Texas Supreme Court, Gonzales penned the first 57 of the “execution summaries”

of the 152 men and women whose state-sponsored death Governor Bush then signed off on. Some of Gonzales’ summaries are infamous, like the one that helped send Terry Washington and his 58 IQ points up to heaven.

The fight to defeat Gonzales’ appointment will be a tall order. Just days after his nomination, Sen. Patrick J. Leahy (D-Vt.) finally got around to taking the famously obscene advice Dick Cheney gave him on the floor of the Senate last June—“Go fuck yourself.” Standing side by side, Leahy told reporters that Gonzales is “a uniting figure.” “I like him,” said Leahy. “Judge Gonzales is no Attila the Hun.”

Although the Democrats have lost seats in the Senate, they still have the numbers to support a filibuster. If the Democratic Party is to mean anything to the millions of activists who kept it alive this year, Democrats in Congress should be put on notice that Gonzales’ confirmation is a fight they cannot skip. It is time to play Eminem’s new CD, *Encore*—at 125 decibels, 24 hours a day—until the Democrats pledge to filibuster. ■



Alberto Gonzales

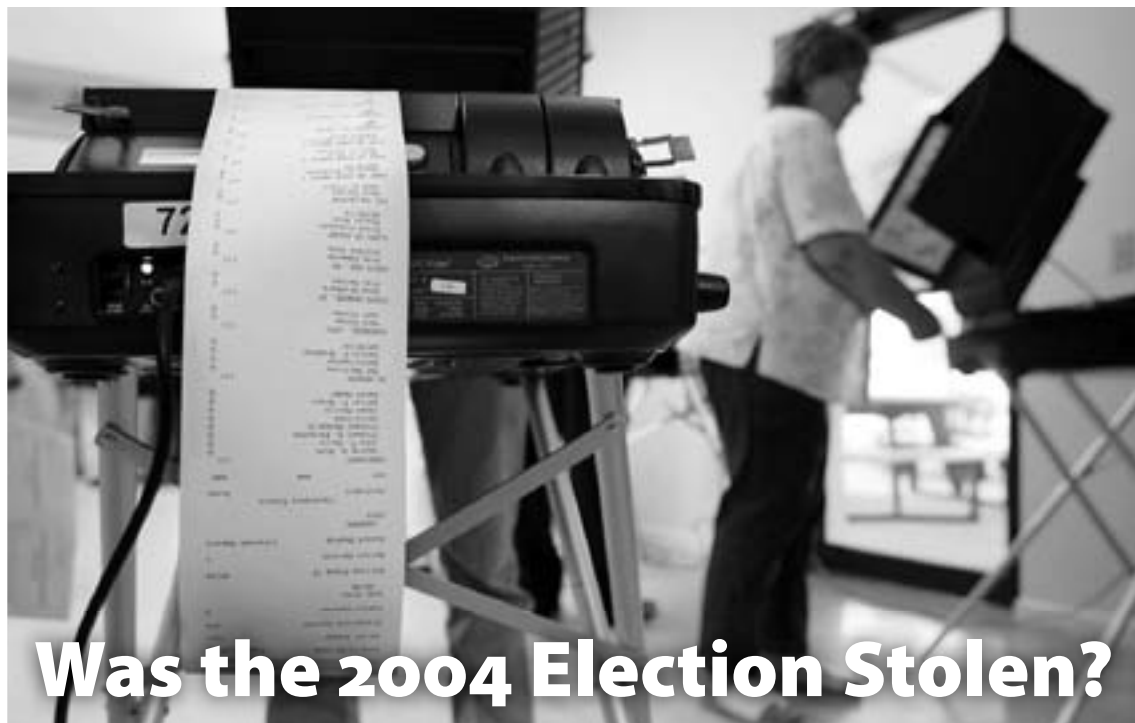
President Bush runs the risk of being prosecuted as a war criminal—unless he decrees through an executive order that what Gonzales termed the ‘quaint’ Geneva Conventions don’t apply to his own behavior.

JAMES SCHAMUS is a screenwriter and producer (Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon, The Ice Storm), co-president of Focus Features (Motorcycle Diaries, The Pianist), and associate professor at Columbia University’s School of the Arts.



The First Stone *By Joel Bleifuss*

The odds
against
all three
of these
statistical
anomalies
occurring
together are
250 million
to one.



MARIO TAMA / GETTY

Was the 2004 Election Stolen?

DID THE BUSH-CHENEY campaign engage in electronic vote fraud to ensure that George W. Bush would be president for another four years? That is a question every small-d democrat should be asking.

Much has been written on the Internet alleging that the election was stolen. Some writers are members of the tin-foil hat brigade, but others provide sober analysis of the election results that raise disturbing questions.

Unfortunately, thanks to the herd instinct in our current media culture, anyone who publicly raises this question is immediately labeled a conspiracy theorist.

In the December 6 *Nation*, Alexander Cockburn dismissed such speculation, writing, "As usual, the conspiracy nuts think plans of inconceivable complexity worked at 100 percent efficiency." Dan Thanh Dang of the *Baltimore Sun* put it this way: "John F. Kerry barely had time to concede the presidential race before the conspiracy theory

began circulating." The headline: "Election paranoia surfaces; Conspiracy theorists call results rigged."

On November 14, a *New York Times* editorial delivered the final verdict on what is now the conventional wisdom:

There is no evidence of vote theft or errors on a large scale. ... There is also no way to be sure that the nightmare scenario of electronic voting critics did not occur: votes surreptitiously shifted from one candidate to another inside the machines, by secret software. It's important to make it clear that there is no evidence such a thing happened, but there will be concern and conspiracy theories until all software used in elections is made public.

Suspend disbelief, buck conventional wisdom and suppose that "such a thing happened"—that the Bush-Cheney campaign "won" the election through systematic electronic voting fraud.

Would the Bush-Cheney campaign have any qualms about

stealing an election? Of course not. They did it in 2000.

They had the motive, and they had the will. But is there any evidence that voting fraud was committed?

Circumstantial evidence

Among the most compelling circumstantial evidence are the independent exit polls that predicted that John Kerry was destined to be the next president. Why were the exit polls, historically so accurate, so wrong?

"Exit polls are almost never wrong," wrote Republican pollster Dick Morris in the November 4 issue of *The Hill*. "So reliable are the surveys that actually tap voters as they leave the polling places that they are used as guides to the relative honesty of elections in Third World countries. ... To screw up one exit poll is unheard of. To miss six of them is incredible. It boggles the imagination how pollsters could be that incompetent and invites speculation that more than

honest error was at play here.” So perplexed was Morris by the data, he suspected a liberal media conspiracy to fix the exit polls so that the networks would declare Kerry a winner and thereby discourage potential Bush voters in the West from going to the polls.

Steven F. Freeman, a statistical analysis professor at the University of Pennsylvania, found some disturbing anomalies when he examined the discrepancies between the predicted vote (exit polls) and the tallied results in 11 battleground states—Colorado, Florida, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Ohio, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania.

The figures he used for the predicted vote came from the exit polls posted by CNN on its Web site. Due to an apparent computer glitch, CNN posted “uncalibrated” data—exit poll data not yet “corrected” to conform to the announced vote tallies—on its Web site until 1:30 a.m. (EST) election night.

In all of these states except Wisconsin, writes Freeman, the predicted margin of votes for each candidate differed from the tallied margin of votes for each candidate, with all the differences going in favor of Bush.

For example, Ohio exit polls predicted that Kerry would win 52.1 percent of the vote to Bush’s 47.9 percent. But the tallied vote had Bush winning 51 percent of the vote to Kerry’s 48.5 percent. The difference, then, between Ohio exit poll projections and the actual tallied vote for Kerry comes to 3.6 percent. Based on the size of the sample the exit polling firms were working with, the likelihood of this happening is less than 1 in 1000. Doing a similar analysis with exit polls in Florida, Freeman found a less than three in 1000 chance that the tallied results would differ as much as they did from the exit poll projections. And while Kerry did carry Pennsyl-

vania, the chance that he would receive only 50.8 percent of the vote after exit polls indicated he would get 54.1 percent (a 3.3 percent difference) is less than two in 1000. Finally, according to Freeman, the odds against all three of these statistical anomalies occurring together are 250 million to one.

“As much as we can say in social science that something is impossible,” he writes, “it is impossible that the discrepancies between predicted and actual vote counts in the three critical battleground states of the 2004 election could have been due to chance or random error.”

What could account for this?

Freeman examines various explanations that have been made in the media for the discrepancy between the exit polls and the tallied vote, and finds all of them lacking.

“Neither the pollsters nor their media clients have provided solid explanations to the public,” Freeman writes. “Systematic fraud or mistabulation is a premature conclusion, but the election’s unexplained exit poll discrepancies make it an unavoidable hypothesis, one that is the responsibility of the media, academia, polling agencies and the public to investigate.”

Mystery votes

Examining the election results from a different angle, a team of researchers at the University of California, Berkeley analyzed the vote in Florida and found that, mysteriously, “electronic voting raised President Bush’s advantage from the tiny edge he held in 2000 to a clearer margin of victory in 2004.” The researchers calculate that electronic voting machines may have given Bush up to 260,000 more votes than he should have received. (Bush won Florida by 360,000 votes.) In the 15 Florida counties using electronic touch-screen voting systems, the number of votes

tallied for Bush significantly exceeded the number of votes he should have received based on voter demographic and voter turnout data. This was especially true in the large, heavily Democratic counties of Broward, Palm Beach and Dade. In Florida counties that used other voting systems, Bush received the same number of votes that the data predicted.

Michael Hout, the chair of Berkeley’s Sociology and Demography graduate program, told Kim Zetter of *Wired.com*, “No matter how many factors

protected against hackers. And in July 2003, researchers at the Johns Hopkins Information Security Institute reported that an examination of one Diebold voting system revealed “significant security flaws,” noting that “voters can trivially cast multiple ballots with no build-in traceability, administrative functions can be performed by regular voters, and the threats posed by insiders such as poll workers, software developers, and janitors is even greater.”

In Ohio, more than 35 counties used Diebold machines

Disturbing anomalies exist between exit polls and the final tallies.

and variables we took into consideration, the significant correlation in the votes for President Bush and electronic voting cannot be explained.”

The Berkeley researchers did a similar study in Ohio, but found no such correlation.

Both Hout and Freeman caution that their research has not yet undergone peer review. Freeman writes, “I have tried to be as rigorous as possible in my data collection, review and analysis. ... To hold it to an academic standard of rigor, however, requires extensive peer review.”

Nightmare scenario

Was it technically possible to steal the election through electronic voting fraud? As the *New York Times* editorial noted, there is “no way to be sure that the nightmare scenario of electronic voting critics did not occur.”

How secure were the electronic machines that were used to tabulate and count the vote? Diebold, the country’s largest voting machine company, made news in 2003 when leaked interoffice memos revealed that company executives knew that their machines were poorly

and nationwide, according to the company’s Web site “over 75,000 Diebold electronic voting stations are being used.”

So, somebody could have hacked the vote.

On November 5, Democratic Reps. John Conyers (Mich.), Jerrold Nadler (N.Y.) and Robert Wexler (Fla.), noting widespread questions raised about the accuracy of the results of the 2004 election, asked the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to investigate the “efficacy of voting machines and new technologies used in the 2004 election.”

“The essence of democracy,” they wrote, “is the confidence of the electorate in the accuracy of voting methods and the fairness of voting procedures. In 2000, that confidence suffered terribly, and we fear that such a blow to our democracy may have occurred in 2004.”

Responding on November 23, the GAO agreed to examine “the security and accuracy of voting technologies, distribution and allocation of voting machines and counting of provisional ballots.”

That would be a good place to start. ■

PEOPLE VS. EM

Only global resistance from below can counter repressive s
capital and compromised NGOs. *By Arundhati Roy*



A protester confronts
Seattle police after
they fired tear gas to
disperse demonstrators
in downtown Seattle on
November 30, 1999.

DAN LEVINE / AFP

PIRE

ates, transnational



IN INDIA, THE WORD *PUBLIC* IS NOW A Hindi word. It means *people*. In Hindi, we have *sarkar* and *public*, the government and the people. Inherent in this use is the underlying assumption that the government is quite separate from “the people.” However, as you make your way up India’s complex social ladder, the distinction between *sarkar* and *public* gets blurred. The Indian elite, like the elite anywhere in the world, finds it hard to separate itself from the state.

In the United States, on the other hand, the blurring of this distinction between *sarkar* and *public* has penetrated far deeper into society. This could be a sign of robust democracy, but unfortunately it’s a little more complicated and less pretty than that. Among other things, it has to do with the elaborate web of paranoia generated by the U.S. *sarkar* and spun out by the corporate media and Hollywood. Ordinary people in the United States have been manipulated into imagining they are a people under siege whose sole refuge and protector is their government. If it isn’t the Communists, it’s al Qaeda. If it isn’t Cuba, it’s Nicaragua. As a result, the most powerful nation in the world is peopled by a terrified citizenry jumping at shadows. A people bonded to the state not by social services, or public health care, or employment guarantees, but by fear.

This synthetically manufactured fear is used to gain public sanction for further acts of aggression. And so it goes, building into a spiral of self-fulfilling hysteria, now formally calibrated by the U.S. government’s Amazing Technicolored Terror Alerts: fuchsia, turquoise, salmon pink.

To outside observers, this merging of *sarkar* and *public* in the United States sometimes makes it hard to separate the actions of the government from the people. Such confusion fuels anti-Americanism in the world—anti-Americanism that is seized upon and amplified by the U.S. government and its faithful media outlets. You know the routine: “Why do they hate us? They hate our freedoms,” et cetera. This enhances the U.S. people’s sense of isolation, making the embrace between *sarkar* and *public* even more intimate.

Over the last few years, the “war on terrorism” has mutated into the more generic “war on terror.” Using the threat of an external enemy to rally people behind you is a tired old horse that politicians have ridden into power for centuries. But could it be that ordinary people, fed up with that poor old horse, are looking for something different? Before Washington’s illegal in-

vasion of Iraq, a Gallup International poll showed that in no European country was support for a unilateral war higher than 11 percent. On February 15, 2003, weeks before the invasion, more than 10 million people marched against the war on different continents, including North America. And yet the governments of many supposedly democratic countries still went to war.

We must question then: Is “democracy” still democratic? Are democratic governments accountable to the people who elected them? And, critically, is the *public* in democratic countries responsible for the actions of its *sarkar*?

If you think about it, the logic that underlies the war on terror and the logic that underlies terrorism are exactly the same. Both make ordinary citizens pay for the actions of their government. Al Qaeda made the people of the United States pay with their lives for the actions of their government in Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Afghanistan. The U.S. government has made the people of Afghanistan pay in the thousands for the actions of the Taliban and the people of Iraq pay in the hundreds of thousands for the actions of Saddam Hussein. Whose God decides which is a “just war” and which isn’t? George Bush senior once said: “I will never apologize for the United States. I don’t care what the facts are.” When the president of the most powerful country in the world doesn’t *need* to care what the facts are, then we can be sure we have entered the Age of Empire.

Real choices

So what does public power mean in the Age of Empire? Does it mean anything at all? Does it actually *exist*? In these allegedly democratic times, conventional political thought holds that public power is exercised through the ballot. People in scores of countries around the world will go to the polls this year. Most (not all) of them will get the governments they vote for. But will they get the governments they want?

In India this year, we voted the Hindu nationalists of the BJP out of office. But even as we celebrated, we knew that on nuclear bombs, neoliberalism, privatization, censorship, big dams—on every major issue other than overt Hindu nationalism—the Congress and the BJP have no major ideological differences. We know that it is the 50-year legacy of the Congress Party that prepared the ground culturally and politically for the far right.

And what of the U.S. elections? Did U.S. voters have a real choice? The U.S. political sys-

tem has been carefully crafted to ensure that no one who questions the natural goodness of the military-industrial corporate structure will be allowed through the portals of power. Given this, it's no surprise that in this election you had two Yale University graduates, both members of Skull and Bones, the same secret society, both millionaires, both playing at soldier-solider, both talking up war, and arguing almost childishly about who would lead the war on terror more effectively. It's not a real choice. It's an *apparent* choice. Like choosing a brand of detergent. Whether you buy Ivory Snow or Tide, they're both owned by Procter & Gamble. The fact is that electoral democracy has become a process of cynical manipulation. It offers us a very reduced political space today. To believe that this space constitutes real choice would be naive. The crisis of modern democracy is a profound one. Free elections, a free press and an independent judiciary mean little when the free market has

tate them, all under the fluttering banner of "reform." As a consequence of such reform, thousands of small enterprises and industries have closed; millions of workers and farmers have lost their jobs and land.

Once the free market controls the economies of the Third World they become enmeshed in an elaborate, carefully calibrated system of economic inequality. Western countries flood the markets of poorer nations with their subsidized agricultural goods and other products with which local producers cannot possibly compete. Countries that have been plundered by colonizing regimes are steeped in debt to these same powers, and have to repay them at the rate of about \$382 billion a year. The rich get richer and the poor get poorer—not accidentally, but by *design*.

To put a vulgar point on all of this, the combined wealth of the world's billionaires in 2004 (587 "individuals and family units"), according to *Forbes* magazine, is \$1.9 trillion—

poor people in many countries, Empire does not always appear in the form of cruise missiles and tanks, as it has in Iraq or Afghanistan or Vietnam. It appears in their lives in very local avatars—losing their jobs, being sent unpayable electricity bills, having their water supply cut, being evicted from their homes and uprooted from their land. It is a process of relentless impoverishment with which the poor are historically familiar. What Empire does is further entrench and exacerbate already existing inequalities.

Until quite recently, it was sometimes difficult for people to see themselves as victims of Empire. But now, local struggles have begun to see their role with increasing clarity. However grand it might sound, the fact is, they are confronting Empire in their own, very different ways. Differently in Iraq, in South Africa, in India, in Argentina, and differently, for that matter, on the streets of Europe and the United States. This is the beginning of *real* globalization. The globalization of dissent.

Meanwhile, the rift between rich and poor is being driven deeper and the battle to control the world's resources intensifies. Economic colonialism through formal military aggression is staging a comeback.

Iraq today is a tragic illustration of this process. The illegal invasion. The brutal occupation in the name of liberation. The rewriting of laws to allow the shameless appropriation of the country's wealth and resources by corporations allied to the occupation. And now the charade of a sovereign "Iraqi government."

The Iraqi resistance is fighting on the frontlines of the battle against Empire. And therefore that battle is our battle. Before we prescribe how a pristine Iraqi resistance must conduct a secular, feminist, democratic, non-violent battle, we should shore up our end of the resistance by forcing the U.S. government and its allies to withdraw from Iraq.

Resistance across borders

The first militant confrontation in the United States between the global justice movement and the neoliberal junta took place at the WTO conference in Seattle in December 1999. To many mass movements in developing countries that had long been fighting lonely, isolated battles, Seattle was the first delightful sign that people in imperialist countries shared their anger and their vision of another kind of world. As

We must expose the policies and processes that make ordinary things—food, water, shelter and dignity—such a distant dream for ordinary people. The real preemptive strike is to understand that wars are the end result of a flawed and unjust peace.

reduced them to commodities available on sale to the highest bidder.

On the global stage, beyond the jurisdiction of sovereign governments, international instruments of trade and finance oversee a complex web of multilateral laws and agreements that have entrenched a system of appropriation that puts colonialism to shame. This system allows the unrestricted entry and exit of massive amounts of speculative capital into and out of Third World countries, which then effectively dictates their economic policy. Using the threat of capital flight as a lever, international capital insinuates itself deeper and deeper into these economies. Giant transnational corporations are taking control of their essential infrastructure and natural resources, their minerals, their water, their electricity. The World Trade Organization, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and other financial institutions, like the Asian Development Bank, virtually write economic policy and parliamentary legislation. With a deadly combination of arrogance and ruthlessness, they take their sledgehammers to fragile, interdependent, historically complex societies, and devas-

more than the gross domestic product of the world's 135 poorest countries combined. The good news is that there are 111 more billionaires this year than there were in 2003.

Modern democracy is safely premised on an almost religious acceptance of the nation state. But corporate globalization is not. Liquid capital is not. So even though capital needs the coercive powers of the nation state to put down revolts in the servants' quarters, this setup ensures that no individual nation can oppose corporate globalization on its own.

Public power

Radical change cannot and will not be negotiated by governments; it can only be enforced by people. By the *public*. A public that can link hands *across* national borders. A public that *disagrees* with the very concept of empire. A public that has set itself against the governments and institutions that support and service Empire.

Empire has a range of calling cards. It uses different weapons to break open different markets. There's no country on God's earth that isn't caught in the crosshairs of the U.S. cruise missile and the IMF checkbook. For

resistance movements have begun to reach out across national borders and pose a real threat, governments have developed their own strategies for dealing with them, ranging from co-optation to repression.

Three contemporary dangers confront resistance movements: the difficult meeting point between mass movements and the mass media, the hazards of the NGO-ization of resistance, and the confrontation between resistance movements and increasingly repressive states.

The place in which the mass media meets mass movements is a complicated one. Governments have learned that a crisis-driven media cannot afford to hang about in the same place for too long. Just as a business needs cash turnover, the media need crisis turnover. Whole countries become old news, and cease to exist, and the darkness becomes deeper than before the light was briefly shone on them.

While governments hone the art of waiting out crises, resistance movements are increasingly ensnared in a vortex of crisis production that seeks to find ways of manufacturing them in easily consumable, spectator-friendly formats. For this reason, starvation deaths are more effective at publicizing impoverishment than malnourished people in the millions.

The disturbing thing nowadays is that resistance as spectacle has cut loose from its origins in genuine civil disobedience and is becoming more symbolic than real. Colorful demonstrations and weekend marches are fun and vital, but alone they are not powerful enough to stop wars. Wars will be stopped only when soldiers refuse to fight, when workers refuse to load weapons onto ships and aircraft, when people boycott the economic outposts of Empire that are strung across the globe.

If we want to reclaim the space for civil disobedience, we must liberate ourselves from the tyranny of crisis reportage and its fear of the mundane. We must use our experience, our imagination and our art to interrogate those instruments of state that ensure "normality" remains what it is: cruel, unjust, unacceptable. We must expose the policies and processes that make ordinary things—food, water, shelter and dignity—such a distant dream for ordinary people. The real pre-emptive strike is to understand that wars are the end result of a flawed and unjust peace.

For mass resistance movements, no amount of media coverage can make up for strength on the ground. There is no alternative, really, to old-fashioned, back-breaking political mobilization.

NGO-ization

A second hazard facing mass movements is the NGO-ization of resistance. Some nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) of course do valuable work, but it's important to consider the NGO phenomenon in a broader political context.

Most large, well-funded NGOs are financed and patronized by aid and development agencies, which are in turn funded by Western governments, the World Bank, the United Nations and some multinational corporations. Though they may not be the very same agencies, they are certainly part of the same loose political formation that oversees the neoliberal project and demands the slash in government spending in the first place.

Why should these agencies fund NGOs? Could it be just old-fashioned missionary zeal? NGOs give the *impression* that they are filling the vacuum created by a retreating state. And they are, but in a materially inconsequential way. Their *real* contribution is that they defuse political anger and dole out as aid or benevolence what people ought to have by right. They alter the public psyche, they turn people into dependent victims and they blunt the edges of political resistance. NGOs form a sort of buffer between the *sarkar* and *public*. Between

Continued on page 28

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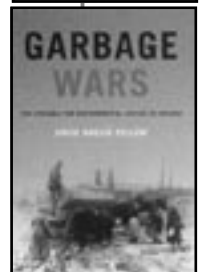
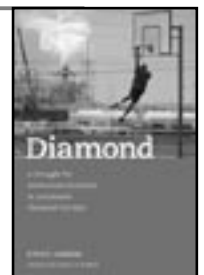
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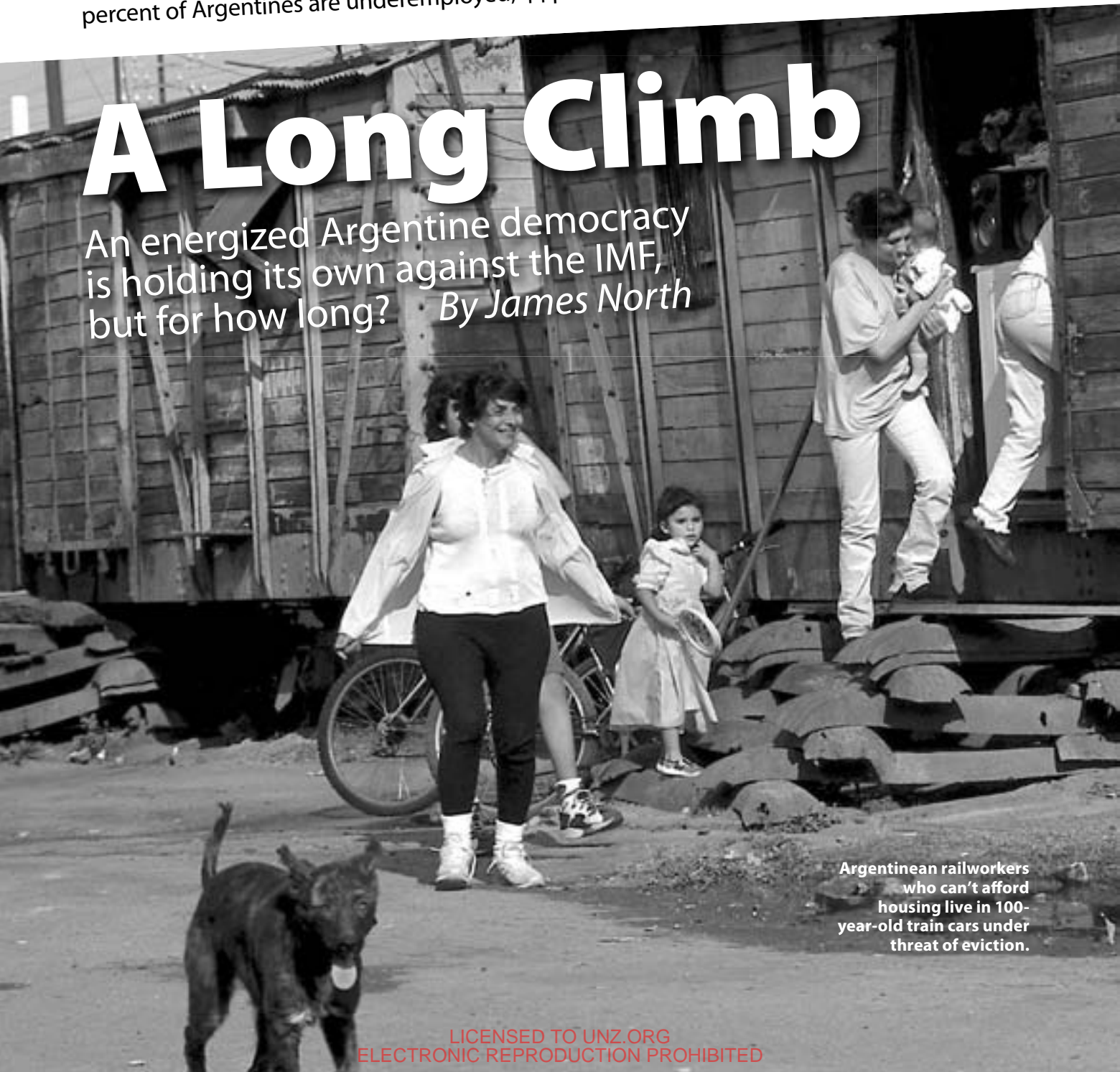
BUENOS AIRES—You will not read about Luis Bianchi's views in mainstream Western press accounts of Argentina's tough negotiations with global financial institutions. Luis Bianchi drives his battered black and yellow taxi here, for 12, 14, sometimes 16 hours a day, with an hour or so off for the early afternoon meal. He is 75 years old, but he is too poor to retire.

"I hope to work for another five years, until I'm 80," he says. "The government will then stop renewing my license. But by then we should be able to get by."

His wife, who is 62, has a low-paid government job. They are helping out his three children, one of whom is part of the estimated 19 percent of the country who are out of work. Another 15 percent of Argentines are underemployed; 44 percent live below the poverty line.

A Long Climb

An energized Argentine democracy is holding its own against the IMF, but for how long? *By James North*



Argentinean railworkers who can't afford housing live in 100-year-old train cars under threat of eviction.

Luis Bianchi is a well-spoken, clear-thinking man who does not have an ounce of self-pity. He has an interesting and nuanced view of Argentina's \$180 billion in foreign debt, which is presently the subject of talks among the Argentine government, international banks and bondholders, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF)—which is playing an even more wicked role here than usual.

Luis Bianchi is not happy that his government in 2001 defaulted on about \$100 billion in bonds, the largest default in history, and he feels guilty about individual investors. He is clearly the sort of man who honors his own obligations, as he did when he bought his taxi 20 years ago.

Luis Bianchi does not say Argentina should not pay 100 percent of the defaulted debt, or that they will not pay it; rather he echoes President Nestor Kirchner in saying the country simply cannot pay. He would remind bondholders (most of them European) that investing does mean risk, and that the big investment firms that advised them to buy are also responsible.

Anyone returning to Argentina after a long absence is astonished at how poor the country has become. Buenos Aires, once the Paris of South America, has a faded, rundown, unpainted air, and provincial cities, like Tucumán and Santiago del Estero in the north, are even worse off.

Over the past few decades, the shantytowns known as *villas miserias* (villages of misery) have expanded; you see them now along the Rio de la Plata and on the road to the national airport. It is the equivalent of tens of thousands of people in shacks along, say, Manhattan's West Side Highway.

What were obviously once middle-class people are now stationed here and there in the once-fashionable center of Buenos Aires, surviving as street vendors or even by outright begging. Underemployed people of all ages stand all along the Calle Florida, the chic pedestrian street, handing out fliers to earn a few pesos. Bands of *cartoneros*, sometimes entire families, live by collecting waste cardboard for resale.

Yet despite the new shabbiness, Argentina today is not a defeated place. People are out demonstrating in the streets nearly every day—for an end to impunity for the military criminals who tortured and murdered during the U.S.-supported dictatorships in the '70s and '80s, against the rising rate of common crime today, for an increase in the old-age pensions that have been reduced to a pitiful level during the crisis.

The tall buildings that house international banks in downtown Buenos Aires no

longer have windows at ground level. They are instead encased in metal armor, as protection against groups of former depositors, armed with hammers, who regularly create a raucous din, still infuriated at losing two-thirds of the value of their savings in the 2001 economic collapse.

Normally, it is hard to organize the unemployed, who are dispersed and dejected. But here in Argentina the movement of the *piqueteros* (literally, the picketers) has had tremendous success in mobilizing tens of thousands to demand higher social welfare payments and, ultimately, jobs. *Piqueteros* march through the central business district and blockade highways across the metropolitan area. (Unfortunately, something of a backlash is emerging among those who are regularly inconvenienced by some *piquetero* direct actions.)

An energized public is probably the center-left President

Kirchner's greatest asset as he negotiates with international financiers. The talks continue, and Argentina will almost certainly reach an agreement with the bondholders in the first few months of 2005.

Alan Cibils, an Argentine economist who lives here but works with the Center for Economic and Policy Research in Washington, estimates bondholders will in the end receive about 50 percent of the value of their original investment. He says President Kirchner has politely reminded American officials that holders of Enron bonds only got back 14 cents on the dollar after that corrupt enterprise defaulted.

But Cibils is worried that even after a satisfactory agreement with the bondholders Argentina will remain vulnerable. "The public debt will still be roughly \$130 billion," he says. "That is between 90 and 100 percent of gross domestic product—still a potentially unstable level of debt."

Cibils, like Argentinians generally, has especially harsh words for the IMF, which is very publicly pressuring the government to come to terms with the bondholders. He points out that the IMF, which is supposed to work as an "objective arbitrator," is actually largely responsible for the awful economic advice and some of the bad loans that contributed greatly to the crisis in the first place.

Back in the '90s, Argentina was regarded as a model student of the IMF and praised with sickening regularity in *The Economist* and the rest of the global press, even though

unemployment has been in double digits since 1997. After the 2001 collapse, the mainstream globalizers tried to back off, hypocritically blaming Argentine governments.

Now, without IMF advice, Argentina is in fact steadily recovering. Growth is estimated at 8 percent this year, and the government is actually running a budget surplus. But now the IMF wants Argentina to use that surplus and give priority to international bondholders over its own citizens, some of whom are desperately hungry.

In August, the IMF managing director, Rodrigo Rato, invited himself to Argentina and told President Kirchner, "At the IMF, we have a problem called Argentina." Kirchner answered, "I have a problem called 15 million poor people."

Despite the economic crisis, Argentina's democracy is proving remarkably resilient.

Argentina's stagnation over the past 50 years has no single cause. But one major factor has been agricultural protectionism in the West. Europe, and to a lesser extent the United States, have kept Argentina's chief exports, beef and grain—a clear violation of "free trade" that the IMF has not been particularly noisy about.

Alan Cibils thinks Argentina has nothing to lose by breaking with the IMF and continuing to manage its own recovery. But no country has ever defaulted to the Fund, and Cibils realizes Argentina would be completely on its own, with no real support from Brazil, Mexico or other Third World nations. He expects the government to give in to the Fund in the end.

Argentina's isolation is a sad sign of the decline in the international anti-globalization movement that followed 9/11. Once, the IMF's terribly unfair policy would have gotten world attention, and been attacked in noisy demonstrations elsewhere. But no longer.

So far, Argentina's crisis has not prompted calls for a return to dictatorship; democracy is proving remarkably resilient. But for how long can any country endure mass unemployment and continued decline without the eventual danger of murderous extremism? Meanwhile, 75-year-old Luis Bianchi continues to work 12-hour days, and considers himself lucky that he has a job. ■

JAMES NORTH (jamesnorth@mail.com) has reported for *In These Times* from Africa, Asia and Latin America since 1977.

*Bush
begins
second
term by
attacking
Social
Security*



Cutting Our Benefits

BY DEAN BAKER

NOVEMBER 2 WAS JUST THE BEGINNING OF THE bad news. Two days after the election, before most of us had even recovered, President Bush told the country that he would use his “political capital” to privatize Social Security.

This declaration of war was smart strategy. Social Security is by far the country’s most important and successful social program. Over the last seven decades it has provided a decent retirement to tens of millions of workers and their spouses. It also provides disability and survivor insurance to almost the entire working population—nearly 2 million children are currently receiving survivors’ benefits. For these reasons, Social Security enjoys enormous public support, regularly getting approval ratings of close to 90 percent in public opinion surveys.

If Bush is going to privatize Social Security, he must move hard and fast—as he has. And if we are going to save it, progressive forces will have to mobilize quickly.

Fact vs. fear

The key to stopping this drive for privatization will be to educate the public about the basic facts on Social

Security. For two decades, the right has been working overtime to undermine confidence in the program. Groups like the Concord Coalition have been telling the country that Social Security is a Ponzi scheme that will inevitably collapse once the baby boomers retire.

The fearmongers have been largely successful. Many workers, especially those under 40, are convinced that Social Security will be bankrupt before they see a dime in benefits. For these people, the promise of a private account sounds pretty good, since they don’t believe they will ever get anything from Social Security anyhow.

Progressives must use every means available to tell people that they have been lied to about Social Security. The program is unambiguously healthy. The Social Security trustees’ report (available on the Social Security Administration’s Web site—www.ssa.gov/oact/tr) shows that the program can pay every penny of benefits through the year 2042, with no changes whatsoever.

Even after 2042, the trustees’ projections show that while the program won’t have enough to pay currently

scheduled benefits—which are approximately 40 percent higher than current benefits—it will still have enough money to pay benefits higher than those that current retirees receive, even when indexed for inflation. The changes necessary to allow full scheduled benefits to be paid throughout Social Security's 75-year planning period are smaller than the changes to Social Security—increased Social Security taxes and benefit cuts—that were made in each of the decades from the '50s through the '80s.

Last June, the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) made an independent assessment of Social Security's finances and concluded that the program could pay all benefits even longer—until 2052—with no changes whatsoever. According to the CBO, the changes needed to keep the program fully funded through its 75-year planning period are less than half as large as the Social Security tax increases put in place in the '80s.

Just to be clear, neither of these projections is based on a rosy scenario about the future. In fact, the Social Security trustees assume that over the next 75 years the economy will experience the slowest pace of productivity growth in its history—there's no “new economy” in this story.

In short, the claims that Social Security is in imminent danger of bankruptcy are just like the claims about Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction—politically motivated lies.

One such claim that gets frequently repeated is that the Social Security trust fund has been “raided,” “spent,” or is just worthless pieces of paper. In fact, the Social Security trust fund holds almost \$2 trillion of government bonds. Under the law, the government must repay these bonds to Social Security from general revenue—this means it will be repaid primarily from progressive personal and corporate income taxes, because workers have already paid for their Social Security benefits. In other words, the government is obligated to tax wealthy people like Donald Trump and Peter Peterson (the founder of the Concord Coalition) to pay for the Social Security benefits that the rest of us have already earned.

The Social Security system lent money to the government to buy these bonds. (This is by design—the trust fund was built up to help pay for the retirement of the baby boomers.) The fact that the government spent the money is meaningless—just as it is meaningless if the government spends

the money it borrows by issuing any other bond. The government is still legally obligated to repay the bond. In short, the people who say “there is no trust fund” are misleading the public. There is a trust fund with \$2 trillion (growing at the rate of \$200 billion a year) unless we let Congress eliminate it.

Privatized pipe dreams

Are private accounts a remedy?

The Bush privatization plan proposes to couple newly created private accounts with large cuts in current basic Social Security benefits. Under this scheme each retiree will get benefits from both these sources.

First, it is important to realize that the privatizers are making implausible claims about the potential returns available from investing in the stock market. Remember, these are exactly the same people who at

siderably reduced benefits, since private accounts will not come close to making up for the accompanying benefit cuts. Under the plan that would provide the basis for Bush's privatization scheme, an average 15-year-old today who retires in 2055 will lose more than 35 percent (\$160,000) of his currently scheduled benefit over the course of his retirement. He stands to gain back less than one-third of this \$160,000 loss from a private account.

Social Security privatization does not look good for most workers because they can expect large benefit cuts, but it is likely to be especially bad for those in lower-income brackets. While Bush's privatization plan actually provides modest benefit increases for low-end workers, it also puts in place a structure that will force the middle class to depend less on the traditionally defined Social Security benefits and more on

The claims that Social Security is in imminent danger of bankruptcy are just like the claims about Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction—politically motivated lies.

the peak of the Internet bubble in 2000 promised that workers would get great returns from investing their Social Security money in the stock market.

No privatizer has yet been able to document in numbers how the privatizers will get their projected stock returns (showing annual dividend payouts and capital gains). When it comes to simple arithmetic, involving trillions of dollars of workers' Social Security money, the privatizers flunk the test.

While private accounts won't do much to increase returns, they will certainly increase risk and add hugely to administrative costs. A worker who happens to retire during a market slump will see much of their benefit disappear. In countries that already have private accounts, like England and Chile, the administrative fees are between 15 and 20 percent of annual benefits. By comparison, the administrative costs of Social Security are less than 0.6 percent of annual benefits. In addition, retirees who want to buy an annuity (an inflation-protected life-long annual payout, like that provided by Social Security) will typically have to pay a fee of at least 10 percent of their private account to convert their account to an annuity.

The bottom line is that under Bush's proposal, workers can expect to see con-

private retirement accounts.

Bush's plan gradually reduces the size of the traditional benefit received by middle-class workers, while increasing the size of private accounts until finally the defined Social Security benefit will become almost irrelevant to anyone but the poor. Under the Bush plan, a child born today who earns an average wage during his working lifetime would get a defined benefit equal to just 10 percent of his wage when he retires. As the middle class depends less and less on Social Security, the benefits pledged to the poor would enjoy about as much political support as welfare does today. Now that would really be a “Mission Accomplished”!

The privatization of Social Security can be stopped. Bush may no longer have to worry about reelection, but members of Congress do. There can be no more important battle. If Bush is stopped on Social Security, then his political capital will have been spent, and he will be the lamest of lame ducks. On the other hand, if he wins ... well, that's not going to happen. ■

DEAN BAKER is co-director of the Center for Economic and Policy Research (www.cepr.net) and co-author of *Social Security: The Phony Crisis* (University of Chicago Press, 2000).

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Kaluli performer,
Papua, New Guinea

BY RACHEL LEARS

Acoustic Ecology

The delicate jingling of many small bells. The crunch of footsteps on bare ground. A quiet car passing. Sheep begin to bleat. In Gragnana, Italy, a shepherd leads his flock of 50 from the Tuscan hills back to the farm. After their arrival,

church bells sound the evening hour.

Steven Feld, in his documentary soundscape series *The Time of Bells*, brings European history alive as bells of all kinds—from animals, churches, bicycles, carnivals—form the raw material for short aural essays about particular places. “I work with time and space in order to tell a story about time and space,” says Feld. “In this case they’re historical stories that are also contemporary. They are stories about power and authority—the authority of ringing the hours. They are pieces that question the state and the church as institutions, and how bells figure in protest and disruption and carnival and play. How the bells make communities audible, and ring the boundaries of the commons. How the history of private land and public land is rung out by the sound of animals moving through those lands.”

Feld’s recordings are to radio journalism what

cinéma vérité is to TV documentary. Like an observational filmmaker, Feld wears light, mobile recording equipment and moves around to capture multiple spatial perspectives that he then edits together. Rather than directly narrating, these pieces draw the listener into the landscape. Feld’s liner notes identify the who, what, where, when and how of the recordings, but it is the unmitigated experience of the compositions themselves that most stimulates one’s attention, allowing listeners to create their own visual accompaniment.

Feld has been working on acoustic ecology—the relationship between human beings and their sonic environments—for more than 25 years. In the mid-’70s, Feld studied for a year with visual anthropologist and *cinéma vérité* pioneer Jean Rouch. During the ’80s, he made a name for himself as an anthropologist, working among the Kaluli of Papua New Guinea and exploring

the links between their musical expression and the sound world of the Bosavi rainforest in which they live. At the same time, Feld was among the first to critically examine the emerging "world music" industry. While sympathetic to the ideal of cross-cultural collaboration, he has consistently pointed out how the music industry's star system and profit motives can re-entrench already existing power relations between different cultures.

In 1991, backed by former Grateful Dead drummer Mickey Hart, Feld produced *Voices of the Rainforest* (Rykodisc), a CD of Bosavi music and rainforest ambience. Hart and Feld set up the Bosavi People's Fund, which the Kaluli themselves control, to receive royalties from both the recording and Feld's writings on Papua New Guinea. The Fund (www.bosavipeoplesfund.org) has financed projects as various as the building of schools and clinics, the creation of a Bosavi-English dictionary and the re-release of a 3-CD set of Kaluli music on the Smithsonian's Folkways label.

Throughout this process, Feld continued to channel his consciousness of his role as a middleman into his scholarship. "I felt I had a responsibility to write about mediation, and to chronicle the kind of anxiety I had," he says. "I felt during the making of *Voices of the Rainforest* that it might be a deal with the devil. ... On the one hand, this would be a way of getting the Bosavi people some serious money and respect, some serious validation in the world of music. On the other hand, every time I see you can go to Encarta's New Guinea map and hear 13 seconds of a Bosavi bamboo jew's harp, I think: 'Have I really participated in caricaturing and cartooning and commodifying people?'"

In 2003, Feld founded the independent record label VoxLox (www.voxlox.net) to publish recordings that had no other

outlet, recordings that advocate for human rights and acoustic ecology. The impetus for VoxLox was Iraqi Rahim AlHaj, a virtuoso of the oud (the Middle Eastern lute) who went into exile in 1991. The two met in 2000 in Albuquerque, where AlHaj had a job as a security guard in a hospital that allowed him to practice the oud all night long. They became friends when they discovered a common passion for the music of Munir Bashir, one of the most renowned oud

The Time of Bells Steven Feld VoxLox

players of all time and AlHaj's mentor at the Institute of Music in Baghdad.

In the spring of 2003, when the third war of AlHaj's lifetime was beginning in Iraq, Feld, then a professor at Columbia University, invited him to perform a solo concert in a New York bookstore. AlHaj's passionate compositions meshed traditional Iraqi rhythms and melodic modes with gestures from classical and flamenco guitar. Between pieces, he explained to the audience that his music was a creative response to the destruction of his homeland. Feld recorded the concert as a souvenir for AlHaj, but realized afterward that the recording should reach a larger audience. When no existing label would pick up *Iraqi Music in a Time of War*, he started his own.

"The CD would become a historical testimony of what it means to play music in a time of war," Feld says. "It's mostly a story about doing what you have to do in that kind of time."

Now, as a result of the album, AlHaj performs regularly and is again able to support himself as a professional musician. (For more information, visit www.rahimalhaj.com.)

Feld sees two interconnected missions for the new label. While some projects promote

human rights by featuring indigenous, refugee or exiled voices, others explore the sound environment and acoustic ecology. The Creative Opportunity Orchestra, a jazz big band from Austin, Texas, will perform suites by Texan composer Alex Coke titled "Iraqnophobia" and "Wake Up Dead Man." Another recording will feature native Alaskan musicians who will be displaced by the Bush administration's slated drilling of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

"That recording connects the environment in general with human rights, because people are singing about their land," says Feld. "And a compilation of Tibetan diasporic rock'n'roll from around the world will advocate for Tibet in a very different way than the Tibetan sacred music that has gotten a lot of attention."

Feld is also concerned with how the media mediates the ways we participate in democracy by controlling access to

information. "The biggest problem with democracy in America is that it has become largely associated with product choice," he says. "How do we create new alternatives for participation? What power does music have as an alternative outlet?"

In the largest sense, VoxLox recordings like *Iraqi Music in a Time of War* bring the expressive cultures of marginalized people to a wider audience. On another level, though, these CDs actively demand participation. *The Time of Bells* sends the listener into a sonic environment. AlHaj's humble voice asks for an empathetic ear. By forcing the listener to respond actively, VoxLox turns recorded sound into a foundation for political engagement and intercultural dialogue. ■

RACHEL LEARS is a musician and a graduate student of anthropology and documentary filmmaking at New York University.

ART SPACE



What's for Dinner? Michelle Waters' images condemn development and overconsumption as the sources of the environmental crisis. They are intended to counter "the constant barrage of corporate-controlled visual images telling us to consume more." See more at www.michellewatersart.com.



The Carter Family

BY KEVIN CANFIELD

Get the Carters

More often than not, tribute albums are irredeemable junk. Need convincing? Available for purchase in this great nation are records commemorating the slushy ballads of John Mayer, the plodding, overwrought rock

of Evanescence and the Motown-lite crooning of Ruben Studdard (the *American Idol* guy).

And ponder this: No fewer than three tribute albums honor the work of Linkin Park, an annoying rap-rock amalgam. (Is there a more perfectly incongruous phrase in the language than “A Gothic Acoustic Tribute to Linkin Park”?)

An exception is Dualtone Record’s recently released “The Unbroken Circle: The Musical Heritage of the Carter Family.” Unlike so many other tributes, the Carters actually deserve the accolade. Recognizing this, producer John Carter Cash set about finding artists

to perform the songs made famous by his forebears in the ’20s, ’30s and ’40s. Carter Cash didn’t have to look far—his parents were country music legends Johnny Cash and June Carter Cash, both of whom recorded songs for this album before their deaths last year.

The Carters—A.P., his wife Sara and Sara’s cousin Mother Maybelle—came out of Virginia in 1927. Over the next decade-and-a-half they did scores of radio shows and recorded 300 songs, the most famous of which might have been “No Depression in Heaven,” an improbably uplifting tale about the economic hard times of the

’30s—Sheryl Crow performs it on this record. The trio stopped playing together in 1943, but Maybelle, by then the “Queen of Country Music,” kept touring with her daughters. One of them, June, would marry Johnny Cash, forming another country music royal family.

Contemporary country has a pretty bad reputation, one it has earned by elevating to superstardom the likes of, say, Brooks & Dunn. But some of the genre’s best contemporary performers—like Loretta Lynn, Mark Erelli and the unsurpassed Norman and Nancy Blake—are the artistic descendants of the Carters. The fam-

ily’s songs of heartbreak and hope—ballads and old-time spirituals, social commentaries and tragic laments, picaresques and morality tales—are the foundation of modern country and, to an extent, rock and pop music. Theirs is a vast legacy.

At times “The Unbroken Circle” feels like an elegy, a late-in-life gathering of voices that have helped define country music for two generations. A weary Johnny Cash turns in a wonderful performance of the Carter classic “Engine One-Forty-Three,” a brisk ballad about an overzealous train conductor (“I want to die so free, I want to die for the engine I love”). June Carter Cash, who passed in May 2003—four months before her husband’s death—sounds wonderful on “Hold Fast to the Right.” (Happily, the song has nothing to do with the political spectrum; it’s about living a decent life, a life that is “right” with God and the universe.) Willie Nelson, now 71, gives what may be the best and most guileless performance on the album, turning the simple lyrics of the Carters’ “You Are My Flower” into the most superb of love songs. And George Jones, born two years before Nelson, does a great “Worried Man Blues.”

John Carter Cash writes in the album’s liner notes, “The songs of the Carter Family are as relevant and as close to our lives today as they were when first recorded.” He’s right. Emmylou Harris sings “On the Sea of Galilee,” a song that sounds at once a century old and brand new. The Blakes tell the story of how feral “Black Jack David” charms a girl out of “her high-heeled shoes, made of Spanish leather.” To listen to “The Unbroken Circle” is to understand where it all came from, and why it still matters. And that kind of record is surely worthy of tribute. ■

KEVIN CANFIELD writes about music for *In These Times*.

BY EARTHA MELZER

A Dubious Doc

Just before the election, a film about Iraq hit art house theaters around the country. *Voices of Iraq* claimed to be a groundbreaking film in which “150 DV cameras [are] distributed across Iraq for the Iraqi people to

show the world who they are and what Iraq will be.”

The results? People seem happy that Saddam is gone and optimistic that, if the United States stays in Iraq, democracy will prevail. They seem unafraid of bombs going off nearby. People say Saddam funded al Qaeda. Former Iraqi political prisoners are shown laughing off the stories of prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib—what Arab man wouldn’t want a female American soldier to play with his penis?

The film begins with shaky handheld footage but the production values increase dramatically as talk turns to the horrors perpetrated by Saddam Hussein—extended sequences of beatings and dismemberment obviously shot using a tripod not supplied by the producers of this film.

So how was this film made? *Voices of Iraq* was pro-

Voices of Iraq
Directed by
the People of Iraq [sic]

moted as a project in which “thousands of ordinary Iraqis become filmmakers” as the cameras are passed hand to hand and—amazingly—all returned to the filmmakers. But Archie Drury, the Gulf War vet and actor who went to Iraq with the cameras, told me that he actually shot some of the footage himself.

Drury also said that the Iraq Foundation was “extremely helpful” to him as he tried to figure out how to get around and who to give the cameras to. The foundation also supplied the torture footage.

The Iraq Foundation, based in Washington, is funded by the State Department and the National Endowment for Democracy.

Not surprisingly, Drury got uncommon access to Iraqis and Iraqi leaders favored by the U.S. government. Among the notables interviewed, but not identified, is Sharif Ali, the cousin of Iraq’s last king. Drury also interviewed a Sheik Aku Bezei, a man he says was the most powerful tribal leader in Fallujah. On November 6, a Sheik Bezei was killed for collaborating with American forces.

Drury says that his commanding general from Desert Storm put him in touch with General Mattis, fighting in the Sunni Triangle, and General Amos of the Air Wing, and that he exchanged e-mails with these generals as he planned his trip.

In an interview in *Movie Maker* magazine, another of the film’s producers, Martin Kunnert, said: “Getting a theatrical release for a

documentary film is still rare. We lucked out in that our distributor, Magnolia Pictures, [which also put out *Control Room* and *Capturing the Friedmans*] was eager to get the film in theaters before the presidential election.”

A call to Magnolia Pictures in New York was answered by a man who, lowering his voice when asked about *Voices of Iraq*, whispered, “Nobody here wanted to release this and we didn’t do any of the promotion on it. [Mark] Cuban steam-rolled us on this.” (Cuban owns Magnolia Pictures, the Dallas Mavericks and much more.)

Jeff Riechert, the Magnolia Pictures contact for *Voices of Iraq*, said that while his company is technically distributing the film, Manning, Selvage & Lee (MS&L) is coordinating the publicity. MS&L has the public affairs contract for the U.S. Army. The firm’s revamp of the Army’s image with the reality TV-style “Army of One” ad campaign is credited with enabling the Army to meet its recruiting goals after a long slump. According to MS&L Managing Director Joe Gleason, he and his colleagues also deliver key targeted messages about the war in Iraq to specific constituencies.

Was the left-leaning art house crowd one of those constituencies? Is the government hiring documentary filmmakers to propagandize the U.S. population?

Nobody involved with the film is willing to say who initially put up the money for the film or how they ended up represented by the Army’s PR firm.

On November 13, as Marines stormed Fallujah, the Marines’ Birthday Ball in San Francisco honored Drury for his work on *Voices of Iraq*, for “going back and living up to the standard of a Marine.” ■

EARTHA MELZER is a writer and videographer in Washington.

People vs. Empire

Continued from page 19

Empire and its subjects. They have become the arbitrators, the interpreters, the facilitators of the discourse—the secular missionaries of the modern world.

Eventually—on a smaller scale, but more insidiously—the capital available to NGOs plays the same role in alternative politics as the speculative capital that flows in and out of the economies of poor countries. It begins to dictate the agenda, turning confrontation into negotiation and depoliticizing resistance.

The cost of violence

This brings us to a third danger: the deadly nature of the actual confrontation between resistance movements and increasingly repressive states. Between public power and the agents of Empire.

Whenever civil resistance has shown the slightest signs of evolving from symbolic action into anything remotely threatening, the crackdown is merciless. We've seen what happened to the demonstrators in Seattle, in Miami, in Gothenburg, in Genoa.

In the United States, you have the USA PATRIOT Act, which has become a blueprint for antiterrorism laws passed by governments around the world. Freedoms are being curbed in the name of protecting freedom. And once we surrender our freedoms, to win them back will take a revolution.

One does not endorse the violence of militant groups. Neither morally nor strategically. But to condemn it without first denouncing the much greater violence perpetrated by the state would be to deny the people of these regions not just their basic human rights, but even the right to a fair hearing. People who have lived in situations of conflict know that militancy and armed struggle provokes a massive escalation of violence from the state. But living as they do, in situations of unbearable injustice, can they remain silent forever?

No discussion taking place in the world today is more crucial than the debate about strategies of resistance. And the choice of strategy is not entirely in the hands of the public. It is also in the hands of *sarkar*.

In this restive, despairing time, if governments do not do all they can to honor nonviolent resistance, then by default they

privilege those who turn to violence. No government's condemnation of terrorism is credible if it cannot show itself to be open to change by nonviolent dissent. Instead, today, nonviolent resistance movements are being crushed, bought off or simply ignored.

Meanwhile, governments and the corporate media (and let's not forget the film industry) lavish their time, attention, funds, technology and research on war and terrorism. Violence has been deified. The message this sends is disturbing and dangerous: If you seek to air a public grievance, violence is more effective than nonviolence.

The U.S. soldiers fighting in Iraq—mostly volunteers in a poverty draft from small towns and poor urban neighborhoods—are victims, just as much as the Iraqis, of the same horrendous process that asks them to die for a victory that will never be theirs.

The mandarins of the corporate world, the CEOs, the bankers, the politicians, the judges and generals look down on us from on high and shake their heads sternly. "There's no alternative," they say, and let slip the dogs of war.

Then, from the ruins of Afghanistan, from the rubble of Iraq and Chechnya, from the streets of occupied Palestine and the mountains of Kashmir, from the hills and plains of Colombia, and the forests of Andhra Pradesh and Assam, comes the chilling reply: "There's no alternative but terrorism." Terrorism. Armed struggle. Insurgency. Call it what you want.

Terrorism is vicious, ugly and dehumanizing for its perpetrators as well as its victims. But so is war. You could say that terrorism is the privatization of war. Terrorists are the free marketers of war. They are people who don't believe that the state has a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence.

Of course, there is an alternative to terrorism. It's called justice. It's time to recognize that no amount of nuclear weapons, or full-spectrum dominance, or "daisy cutters" or spurious governing councils and *loya girmas* can buy peace at the cost of justice.

The urge for hegemony and preponderance by some will be matched with greater intensity by the longing for dignity and justice by others. Exactly what form that battle takes, whether it's beautiful or bloodthirsty, depends on us. ■

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



ARUNDHATI ROY is the author of *The God of Small Things*, a novel for which she won the Booker Prize in 1997. This article is adapted from *Public Power in the Age of Empire* (Seven Stories, 2004) which is based on a speech Roy gave to the American Sociological Association in August 2004.

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Maps

Continued from page 32

centuries, I am perplexed by the apparent loss of short-term memory of many cultural theorists now in vogue, who were alive and active in the '70s.

Can we forget Daniel Ellsberg's publishing of the Pentagon Papers, the uncovering of the Watergate scandal, the break-in to an FBI office by an anonymous group that led to revelations of COINTELPRO and the Freedom of Information Act, the many Senate investigations of FBI corruption, the widespread solidarity with Third World independence movements, the plethora of underground and alternative presses and global mail art networks—all operated by radical activists, artists and intellectuals? Those of us who can at least recall the ways that these strategic interventions transformed political and cultural life in that decade necessarily cast a skeptical glance at the messianic claims of technocentrists.

The shift from Eurocentric internationalism to a more globally inclusive worldview came long before the age of the Internet. It was launched outside Europe and America, and emanated from the geopolitical margins. The process took place across a range of fields of knowledge, culture and politics. This revision of the world picture was catalyzed by postwar decolonization; the Non-Aligned Movement launched in 1961; and civil rights struggles in the developed world, including the Black Power and Chicano movements—all of which invariably affirmed their alliances with Third World revolutions. This political process was expanded upon by a postcolonial understanding that various diasporas shared transnational connections and that these diasporas were produced by the economics and politics of colonialism and imperialism. The historical bases of these movements are consistently obfuscated by the technocentric rhetoric of networks and mapping that emanate from Europe, North America and Australia.

Instead of dealing with these histories, contemporary discourses on globalism and new technology tend to dismiss postcolonial discourse as "mere identity politics." They tend to confuse bureaucratic efforts to institutionally separate the concerns of

ethnic minorities with what always have been the much broader agendas of anti-racist political struggles and postcolonial cultural endeavors.

I am a great admirer of the practice of electronic civil disobedience and have used "hacktivist" software such as Floodnet to engage in online protest actions myself. But I find the willed historical amnesia of new media theory to be quite suspect, and even dangerous. One of the reasons I chose to make *a/k/a Mrs. George Gilbert*, a video art piece about the Angela Davis case, was

social and biological—which is to say, maps of vast spaces and physical phenomena and maps of the most minuscule thing. We hear over and over again about global systems and panoptic vision on the one hand and genome chains and nano-entities on the other. When I first noticed this phenomenon I was struck by how it complements the resurgence of formalist art criticism's love affair with the grid. By this I am referring to the return in the '90s to the definition of art as a search for "perfect forms," and a celebration of the formal

While realistic depictions of the violence of war via photographs and film have been banned from American television news, maps are acceptable because they dehumanize the targets.

because I wanted to reexamine crucial histories that are now being forgotten within the contemporary conversations on globalization. The alienation caused by multinational corporate domination (otherwise known as Empire) that many middle-class young adults in the Global North feel is just the last chapter in a long history of reactions against imperial projects.

Mapping mistakes

Another issue of concern is the new media culture's fascination with mapping—a fascination that it shares with the military strategists. The news of the Iraq war frequently involves men in uniform pointing to or better yet walking across maps of various Middle Eastern countries—so when I then walk into galleries and cultural conferences in Europe and find more men (without uniforms) playing with maps, I start to wonder about the politics of those representations.

In the American media, maps dominate representations of warfare. While realistic depictions of the violence of war via photographs and film have been banned from American television news, maps are acceptable to those in power because they dehumanize the targets. Similarly, in the context of the art world, maps have come to abstract and thereby silence individual and group testimony.

New media culture uses maps to read the world in terms of extremes. Contemporary cultural theory is rife with renderings that celebrate macro views and micro views of the workings of the world, both

characteristics of objects and surfaces.

What I have become more concerned about as time goes on, however, is how this fetishizing of spatial extremes enables the resurgence of Descartes' idea that humans are rational, autonomous individuals and that the human mind and mathematical principles are the source for all real knowledge.

However objective they may appear, maps do have a point of view, and that is one of privileged super-human sight, of safe distance and of omniscience. The mapmaker charts an entire field of vision, an entire world, and in doing so he (yes he) plays God. Whether you are beholding the map as a viewer or charting it as the cartographer, you rule the world before you, you control it, and, in putting everything in its place, you substitute a global whole established through pictorial arrangement for an actual dynamic engagement with individual elements and entities. The psychological motive behind assuming that position of power is not questioned, nor is the predominance of white male technocrats in that discourse seen as anything more than incidental.

It is as if more than four decades of postmodern critique of the Cartesian subject had suddenly evaporated. Those critical discourses that unmasked the way universals suppress difference, which gave voice to the personal experience of women, the poor and disenfranchised minorities, are treated as inherently flawed by *both* the progressive and conservative discourses of globalism. Progressive media

advocates dismiss these discourses of difference as “essentialist” while Republicans decry them as “the tyranny of special interests.” But both provide ideological justification for the dismantling of legislation protecting civil rights.

Viewing the world as a map eliminates time, focuses disproportionately on space and dehumanizes life. In the name of a politics of global connectedness, artists and activists too often substitute an abstract “connectedness” for any real engagement with people in other places or even in their own locale.

What gets lost in this focus on mapping is the view of the world from the ground: lived experience. What is ignored is the pervasiveness of the well-orchestrated and highly selective visual culture that the majority of Americans consume during most of their waking hours. Most people are not looking through microscopes and telescopes and digital mapping systems to find truth about the world. They are watching reality TV, sitcoms, the Super Bowl, MTV and Fox News, all of which also offer maps of a completely different kind: conspiracy theories that pit innocent Americans against the Axis of Evil, embed-

ded journalists’ hallucinatory misreadings of foreign conflicts, allegories of empowerment through consumption and endlessly recycled, biblically inspired narratives of sin and redemption.

Going off-grid

Finally we should consider what is being left off the maps and why? What has happened, for example, to institutional self-critique in the art world? Why has such examination become taboo in exhibitions or unpopular with artists who gravitate to political subjects? Why in the midst of myriad investigations of corporate control of politics and culture is there little or no attention paid to corporate control of the museums and of corporate influence in art collecting? Why is it acceptable to the art world for an artist to address the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but not to address the pressure put on the organizers of global art exhibitions to showcase a disproportionate number of Israeli artists? Why is it fine for black artists to celebrate the construction of black style but not to make visible the virtual absence of black people as arbiters in the power structures of the art institutions, galleries, magazines and auction

houses where black art is given economic and aesthetic value?

We live in a very dangerous time in which the right to express dissent and to raise questions about the workings of power is seriously imperiled by fundamentalisms of many kinds. Now more than ever we need to keep the lessons of history foremost in our minds and to defend the critical discourses and practices that enable differing experiences and perspectives to be heard and understood.

There are just too many important parallels to be drawn between COINTELPRO and the excesses of law enforcement brought about by the Patriot Act to be dismissive of history. Socially conscious artists and activists, rather than embracing tactics that rely on dreams of omniscience, would do well to examine the history of globalism, networks, dissent and collective actions in order to understand that they are rooted in the geopolitical and cultural margins. ■

COCO FUSCO is an interdisciplinary artist and an associate professor at Columbia University’s School of the Arts. Her most recent publication is *Only Skin Deep: Changing Visions of the American Self* (Abrams, 2003).

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By Coco Fusco

Questioning the Frame:

Thoughts about maps and spatial logic in the global present

Terms such as “mapping,” “borders,” “hacking,” “transnationalism,” “identity as spatial,” and so on have been popularized in recent years by new media theories’ celebration of “the networks”—a catch-all phrase for the modes of communication and exchange facilitated by the Internet.

We should proceed with caution in using this terminology because it accords strategic primacy to space and simultaneously downplays time—i.e., history. It also evades categories of embodied difference such as race, gender and class, and in doing so prevents us from understanding how the historical development of those differences has shaped our contemporary worldview.

Technocentric fantasy

The rhetoric of mapping and networks conflates the way technological systems operate with modern human communication. According to this mode of thought we are to believe that we live inside the world of William Gibson’s *Neuromancer* and that salvation is only attainable via very specific technological expertise unleashed against the system—i.e., hacking. Consider the heroes of Hollywood sci-fi blockbusters such as *The Matrix* whose power lies in their knowledge of “the code.” It is implied that we operate in networks because computers and the Internet have restructured “our” lives and because global economic systems have turned us into global citizens. Hacking then comes to stand for all forms of critical engagement with preexistent power structures.

I’m just a little too old to believe these new media mantras unquestioningly. This rhetoric implies two possible explanations for the difference between the networked present and the non-networked past.

The first explanation suggests that no one on the left before the age of the Internet practiced subversive manipulation of existent media, tactical intervention, investigative reporting and infiltration of power structures. It also would seem that before the dawning of the networks, no one knew what being an organic intellectual was about, no one elaborated alternative communication systems and no one was aware of or sensed a connection to geographic regions other than Europe.

The second explanation would be that electronic communication has produced a form of networking that is so radically different as to imply a neat break with the past. In either case, these arguments conveniently situate their advocates outside history, since either way tactical media practitioners have nothing of value to inherit from the past.

While I can understand that there might be a dearth of knowledge about tactical interventions of previous

Continued on page 30